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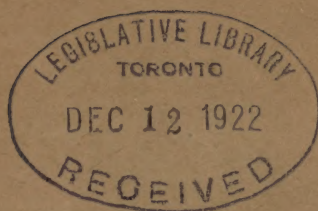
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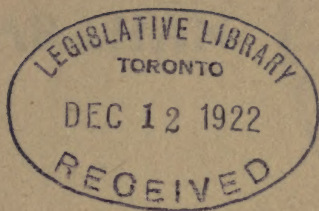
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# SHIP AHOY!





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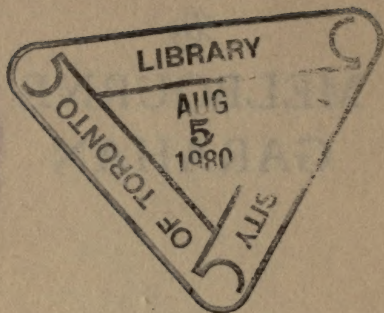
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To  
MY WIFE



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## NOTE

**I**N this endeavour to present an accurate picture of the hard, yet happy and irresponsible, life aboard sailing ships, now unfortunately rapidly vanishing, I have drawn almost entirely from actual experiences.

Though every character in the book has, or had, its living inspiration, it is intended to typify and not reveal the great originals, who have been hidden under false names and on a few occasions attached to experiences not really theirs.

The last few years have witnessed many wonderful changes of fortune, and possibly "Cherry" is to-day a much respected sky-pilot or President of a Republic, while the man who punched me on the jaw in that Stockton public-house is a Labour leader in Sunny Australia. More probably they are still "biscuit-eating stiffs."

Should any of those beloved wayfarers imagine that he can identify himself, even but dimly, he will forgive me, for I count amongst the great things of life his passing friendship. Also I am seven feet high, and broad, and, if "Cherry" appears, can run like a hare.

M. G.



## CHAPTER I

### THE CAREER CHOSEN

A NUMBER of small boys, of ages ranging from six to nine, were playing in the paddock behind our house. After much talk a magnificent attack by the Fog-on-the-hilltop tribe had been organised and the stern braves retired to their positions. Some half-dozen proceeded into a corner and built a wigwam out of old tins and bottles, while the great horse-drawn roller represented the stockade. When this was finished their leader jumped atop of the roller and hurled a very shrill yell of defiance at the desperate and cruel redskins crouching, and indeed patiently awaiting this signal, in the opposite corner of the field.

Cautiously, and with infinite cunning and woodcraft, the savage attackers crept towards their enemies, breathing heavily with the lust of slaughter and determined to secure all the treasure in the wigwam of the accursed palefaces, or to perish in the attempt.

"Courage, men," counselled their leader, and then suddenly springing up he squeaked the order to charge, and with a series of treble yelps the great attack was begun. But immediately there was a serious hitch. Little Arnold had been detailed to be "shot in the stomach" to add a touch of reality to the attack, and at this moment he said "Oh!" and sat quietly down, hoping no doubt to watch the rest of the action in comfort and security.

But he reckoned without his Chief. This cruel, relentless warrior made his battles "by the book," and this sort of slovenly slaughter was intolerable, so the battle was stopped while the Chief showed both attackers and defenders exactly how a brave behaves when shot through the abdominal regions.

"Gur-r-r-r!" he growled. "Boys, I'm done . . . ah . . . ah . . . tell 'em . . . ouch . . . tell 'em I died . . . oooh . . . gerr . . . wah . . . fighting . . . ouch."

He clapped his hands to his stomach and threw back his head, writhing and groaning in his agony, and then bent suddenly double preparatory to falling, heroic and all spread out, on the sward, weltering in his own gore, there or thereabouts. But as he doubled up, his arrow swung round and hit the ground, while the sharpened point caught him in the middle of the forehead, and then all pretence was dropped, for he had very nearly given an exact illustration of how a boy of nine dies when transfixed through the head by a wooden arrow.

That cruel, relentless Chief—in other quarters he was referred to as that young lunatic—was my young brother Arthur, and when my mother and I returned from a visit to London we found the entire household in a frantic state of excitement. My sisters and the maid were rushing about with bowls full of a pink liquid, and there were all the signs of a real base hospital after that terrible battle of the paddock. As usual, I was told to get out of everybody's way, and so I retired to

the tool-shed to go on with the carving of some wood that I vainly hoped to convert into a magnificent ship.

An hour later the maid informed me that my father wished to see me in the study. In my short experience the connection of those three words, father—see—study, had always meant trouble, and although my conscience was quite clear I made haste slowly while I pondered what was the matter this time, and had one more rapid survey of the recent past to see if it was not possible to get into the position so aptly recommended by the proverb : forewarned is forearmed.

Perhaps *I* was to be accused of nearly killing Arthur, if not of the actual deed, then surely of a long course of most reprehensible behaviour and example that had encouraged the poor innocent little "saint" to do these foolish things. When I reached the study the door was open and the room empty, but I could hear my father's voice in our bedroom, and tiptoeing up, I heard :

"How did it happen?"

"I was showing Arnold how to be shot in the stomach."

"God bless my soul, with your head?"

"No, he *had* been shot, but he did not do it properly, so I did it."

"Yes, I can see that, but who fired the shot?"

"Nobody of course, it was a maginary shot."

"Good heavens! Then what made the hole in your head?"

"I told you, Arnold *had* been shot, but he did not do the *dying* properly, so I did it because it

would have been silly like he did it. And then the arrow caught me in the head. . . .”

“What, another one?”

“NO. It wasn’t *meant* to do it.”

I heard my father’s chair go back, and shot down the stairs just in time, and I noticed that my father did not look very serious as he shut the study door. But I was right, at least I thought so by the opening remark :

“Do *you* know what happened to that boy? Who shot what, and how did his head stop a shot meant for another’s stomach?”

I could easily have conducted that battle myself, so that it was a matter of no difficulty to reconstruct the scene and fully explain the event to my father. Dismissing the subject with some reference to “young lunatics,” he picked up a letter from his desk and went on :

“For some time your mother and I have been considering your future. Reports from school have not been too encouraging, and in the last term’s report there is an ominous remark that you appear to lack a proper sense of discipline. That will never do. Discipline, my boy, is a very necessary thing. Rules and regulations are drawn up with a definite purpose, and then men or boys, prefects or monitors, are set in authority to see these are adhered to and carried out, and you must understand that there is nothing unmanly or humiliating in being subject to discipline.

“However, we have decided upon a career in which you will learn much more about discipline



than I can tell you. I have just received a letter to say that your name appears in the list of entrants to H.M.S. *Worcester* for the summer term. There, for two years, you will be taught the science of navigation, and at some time during the period, and according to your progress, we will decide whether you are to go for the Navy or the Merchant Service. . . .”

He went on with a lot more advice and good counsel, but I was not listening. I was away in the Pacific Ocean, getting tattooed, spearing turtles, manning yards, heaving the lead and having all manner of gaudy adventures.

Not even aware at that time of this lack of a sense of discipline, I could not defend myself even had I felt inclined to do so, but later experience has exposed the “root” of this evil, and since it has a great deal to do with the why and the wherefor of experiences enjoyed or suffered later on in life, I will here crave the reader’s indulgence for a digression.

Like all boys of my age and class I had been brought up to accept unquestioningly an immense array of statements and assertions, and I trace the first seeds of scepticism and independent enquiry to a thoughtless remark. Love of exercise and hatred of and disinclination for studies had made me proficient at gymnastics, and just before I left the school I had been selected to represent the House in the Under Fourteen Gymnastic competition.

The night before the event the House Master came into the dormitory and asked me how I

felt. I replied that I felt very fit and was sure I should do very well, but that, of course, I did not hope to beat Parbury, who had set up a school record by getting into the VIII when he was only thirteen. Then he said:

"You must pray hard and then you will win."

After he had gone and the lights were out I turned this suggestion over, and it seemed to me the dirtiest and most unsportsmanlike piece of advice I had ever received. If I was the only one of the eight representatives, two from each house, to pray, it was only taking a mean advantage of those other manly boys who had the pluck to work off their own bat. And if we all prayed well, we would be just where we were, except that the general excellence ought to astonish old Sergeant Penn.

Still, perhaps I had better pray a bit, because supposing I was the only one *not* to pray, my work would appear positively disgraceful. No, I would not pray. I decided it were better to play the game and lose, than win with artificial assistance of any sort. And supposing you could do better by praying, I would not do it for any sport, but golly, wouldn't I be at it all the time just before the examinations, especially those for French and Latin? Then again, supposing I did pray and then did not win. What sort of a boy was I if God could not win an under fourteen gym comp with me? No, it was too risky a business for me altogether.

If that master had only told me to pray that I would do my best, which he no doubt meant, I

would have taken it just as if he had said, "Keep your eye on the ball," or any of the standard axioms of sport; but he had distinctly implied, as I understood, that prayer would get me through despite the undoubted superiority of other boys.

All night long my young brain scampered round this problem, and the seeds of doubt and scepticism were sown in rich soil. Next morning I was looking very pale and worn out, and the House Prefect said:

"If you don't win this afternoon, I'll wallop you."

Well, I did win, and that House Master was delighted, and no doubt for years after he told of the incident as an example of the power of prayer, and equally, no doubt, set many another young boy thinking twenty years too soon. He would have been correct if he had attributed the success to the fear of House Prefects.

I had, to my own satisfaction anyway, examined and torn to shreds one of these accepted facts, and flushed with this success I looked for fresh fields to conquer. Was all this stuff of the old men equally so much make-believe to keep the young men crushed, oppressed, down-trodden and humble? What a terrifying thought! I must look into all these matters afresh, and there could be no more meek acceptance just because the old people asserted.

For some time this obsession played havoc and I wanted an answer to my WHY? whether it concerned a dogma of faith, an everyday custom, or a rule of the school or playing-field. I must

have been a maddening little insect, and there was considerable wisdom in that old Head Master's summing-up of the mad, squirming question of my brain as a lack of the sense of discipline.

But analyse it and admit the folly as you will, that same sense of discipline, or its basic sense of respect, is still missing. I can obey an officer as well as the next man, and I believe enforce my own authority equally well, but once a semblance of "make-believe" creeps in I feel only the desire to ridicule or laugh.

Aloft in the fury and reality of a gale of wind, creeping slowly towards the reality of a sniping rioter in an Indian city, under any discipline that has an obvious *raison d'être* I claim to be an ordinary level-headed man.

But the host of what may be termed "pin-prick" regulations and social conventions, which appear to have been invented and enforced solely to annoy harmless and inoffensive people, or to bolster up a rotten class, are to me like a red rag to a bull.

I can tolerate and often enjoy a religious procession, even though the declared tenets of the participants are to me anathema. It is because I know that it is a reality and a most serious and important business to those concerned. But I see red when I hear a politician telling lies, which I know he knows to be lies, but which he also knows is the stuff to give the public at the moment. And I only want to sneer or laugh at the whole gamut of social etiquette, the great living lie of the universe.



Once "let's pretend" creeps in, I become an atheist, an agnostic, a bolshevik, or any other contrary IC. It would seem of no account to record this, but it is my experience that ninety-nine per cent. of the world will swallow falsehood, knowing full well that it is falsehood, if only the swallowing is a little easier and results in a little more comfort than the refusal to swallow.

Before leaving this digression I would explain that in an endeavour to present the reality of seafaring life I have ventured to make the characters in this book talk as they *really* do talk. Lately I read a book in which was described a heavy sea breaking aboard, smashing the skylight, pouring down below in a regular cataract and washing the mate and his meal round the cabin. "Good heavens!" the mate spluttered as he struggled to his feet.

Don't you believe it. No mate of a sailing ship ever said *that* under such circumstances. What he said could not be printed, of course, but throughout I have endeavoured to keep a little closer to reality, and I will here beg the pardon of those who consider that in the interests of reality I have exceeded the limits of propriety. And now, overboard with the digression.

A few days later, March 9, 1901, was my fourteenth birthday, excluding the first and to my mind most important of them all, and the presents consisted of various books about the sea, and most prized of all, a huge jack-knife, the envy of all my friends and the terror of all my enemies,

until such time as it was taken away from me and put in a drawer until I joined my ship.

In due course I was taken to London to be measured for my uniform, and as some indication to the romance ahead of me I read Silver & Co. above the outfitter's shop. When my gear arrived I was taken for a tour of inspection and admiration by my relatives, and in the first week of May, accompanied by my mother and father, proceeded to Greenhithe and on to the famous old ship.

## CHAPTER II

### H.M.S. WORCESTER

**H.** M.S. *WORCESTER* is one of the old wooden walls, and is a replica of the famous *Victory*, except that it is slightly smaller and its history not so stirring.

Its declared function is the education of young gentlemen desirous of becoming officers in the Mercantile Marine, but there are also six cadetships annually for the Navy, divided between the *Worcester* and its famous Mersey rival, the *Conway*. These Naval appointments are made in order of merit as revealed by an examination, and it is therefore possible for all the entrants of one year to come from one only of these ships.

These two institutions for training officers, together with the development of the system of apprenticeship into its latest form, wherein from the first day aboard the apprentice, despite plenty of hard and dirty work, is distinctly treated as a potential officer and not as a young member of the ship's crew, reflect the foresight of their founders.

With the magnificent tradition of the Merchant Service it may appear almost insolent to suggest defects at any time in its history, but there is no doubt that the modern officer is a *very great* improvement on his prototype of fifty years ago. Doubtless in those days there were many fine men at sea, but generally it was considered a rough business for rough men. By individual

effort men forced themselves from the fore-castle to the saloon, but with them they usually brought the moral atmosphere and all the harshness and cruelty of "before the mast."

At the beginning of the nineteenth century it was calculated that no less than fifty thousand slaves were annually carried from Africa to the West Indies and other parts of America by ships belonging to the merchants of Bristol and Liverpool. The wretched negroes were packed on shelves with hardly room to breathe, their only exercise during the voyage was dodging the lash on deck, and they were practically starved. If head winds or calms delayed the vessel the captain overhauled his stores and then paraded the slaves and calmly threw over-board a few dozen of the weakest looking.

Wolf Tone, the great Irish patriot, tells of an experience about the same time. He was proceeding to America in the *Cincinnati* of two hundred and thirty tons, with over three hundred and fifty passengers aboard. A cabin, eight feet by six, was provided for his party of three women, two men and two young boys, and therein he had to erect the berths. As if the perils and discomforts on such a tiny cockle-shell were not already sufficient, he says :

"About July 20 we were stopped by three British frigates, *Thetis*, *Hussar* and *Esperance*, who boarded us, and after treating us with the greatest insolence, both officers and men, they *pressed* every one of our hands, save one, and nearly fifty of my fellow passengers."



It was only the screams of the womenfolk that induced this mid-ocean press-gang to release Tone, who was already half-way down the gang-way.

It was a cruel rough age, we know, but the boy who witnessed or assisted in some of that slave-dumping or man-stealing was the captain in the middle of the last century.

It is incredible that only a hundred years ago a group of sailors could *lawfully* tear a peaceful and inoffensive man from the bosom of his family and bundle him off to sea, and then no doubt hammer him into a real sailorman. The British Admiralty is the father of the boarding-house system that even to-day unlawfully snatches peaceful men and bundles them off to sea, where they are hammered into sailors, often by mates who made their entry into the profession in the same undignified and violent way.

During the last century extraordinary improvement has been effected in the living conditions of the working classes, but these same improvements were only gained as the result of much strenuous fighting and combined action. With its members scattered all over the globe, the Merchant Service was the last to feel the "moral uplift," and its very scatteredness and its constantly changing membership made a formidable barrier to all changes.

In 1850 the service was undoubtedly very much behind the times, and with the vast prospects opened up by the application of steam

and the proved efficiency of the screw propeller, shipowners were compelled to give serious attention to the manning of their vessels.

The type of man who skippered one of those slave ships was not good enough to take command of mighty floating hotels, and the policy adopted by the wise shipowner was to attract a better class of man, to provide and later insist upon a very much higher standard of education, and to add a dignity and rewards to the calling sufficient to satisfy this better type, and maintain the supply.

The purely seamanlike qualities of the rough men of the former years had to be preserved, and hence the preference for men who had been trained in sailing ships ; but for the efficient command of a vessel such as the *Oceanic* and up to the giants of to-day, the *Mauretania* and *Baltic*, the addition of a very high all-round mental equipment is essential.

Try to conceive a floating town, with a very mixed population of some five thousand, rushing through the water at nearly thirty miles an hour, and complete in every detail to provide the accustomed luxury of the rich and the good plain living of the poor, with its own fire-brigade, a miniature coal-mine, a power station, restaurants, lifts, bands, a newspaper, telephones, a telegraph office, a bank, and the whole bound to its schedule like a mail train. A thousand threads of knowledge, authority and control come together in the person of the Commander. Nothing, not even the flirtation of passengers, is

beyond his knowledge, and nothing, not even the flirtation of passengers, is beyond his authority.

There must be a wonderful tonic in the sea air, for despite his responsibilities the captain of a liner is invariably genial, invariably polite and considerate. There are occasions when even their monumental patience is taxed to the utmost, as the following little incidents on a recent run on an Orient liner will show.

The great vessel had just cleared the Heads at Sydney and most of the passengers were leaning over the rail and watching the pilot boat slip astern. A dear old lady button-holed the captain, in full regalia and descending from an anxious time on the bridge, and said :

“ Oh, *steward*, when will we get to Tilbury, and have you seen my deck-chair ? ”

We were playing deck quoits on the boat deck, and one of the party was a fresh and pretty young girl making her first voyage. A thrown quoit rolled under the rail and out on to the unprotected boat platform. The beautiful maid, with many a shrill titter, climbed over the rail and secured the quoit, and was mightily astonished when the captain came down from the bridge and spoke to her very sharply about the folly of her action, the grave danger she had run, and the inconvenience to him if she had fallen overboard, even if a boat had been able to pick her up in time. He did not want any damfool entries in *his* log.

Probably ignorant of the real danger and amused at what she innocently thought was

just ragging the lovable and very good-looking captain, a few minutes later the girl went after another straying quoit. The captain left no room for doubt this time. He threatened to lock the now tearful maiden in her cabin, he prohibited quoits on that particular pitch and intimated that if there was any further foolishness he would prohibit all games entirely.

And an hour later the captain was amusing us at the luncheon table with details of the morning's court-martial of two stokers for smuggling beer aboard, which was interrupted by a Marconigram from a ship in trouble two hundred miles to the south-west; but we had resumed our course when a later message brought the news that nearer ships had already reached the disabled one. Meanwhile, who was his partner in the mixed deck tennis? although the glass was going low and he doubted if we would be able to get far with the tournament this side of Ceylon. When the coffee came the pretty delinquent asked him *please* to tell her how he won the D.S.O. And as we left the table he regretted he could not knock my head off at chess because he was giving the afternoon to the Purser, but I was not to forget the medicine ball at six o'clock. But at six o'clock he could not turn up because he had to go with the Padre and *fix* the Sunday church service. Gee!

For more than half a century the *Worcester* and the *Conway* together have sent out some two hundred young men per year, and this generous supply of "leaven" has had its effect.



To-day the officers of the great liners are of a class similar to that of the Navy, and their stirring deeds during the Great War proved that in the general uplift not one iota of bravery, daring, heroism or efficiency has been lost. During the period dealt with in this book there were a lot of the old school, hard-case biscuit-eating old stiffs, but they were to be found only on sailing ships and on little tramp steamers.

Do not think that the entire credit is given to these two training ships. They are but the outward manifestation of the acceptance by the shipowners of the urgent necessity of taking steps to bring about the change that is now consummated.

The Board of Trade encouraged the movement by ruling that two years on one of these ships should count as one year at sea for the purpose of time qualification for examinations, and the Admiralty and all the principal shipping companies lent assistance by giving valuable prizes and even more valuable openings in their services.

The Hooghly Pilot Service, the best paid and most efficient body of pilots in the world, is recruited almost entirely from the *Worcester* and the *Conway*. Kipling tells of the Wind:

“I set my hand to the Hooghly, like a hooded  
snake it rose  
And flung your stoutest steamers to roost with  
the startled crows.”

Its constantly shifting bed in the muddy

delta of the Ganges, its rapid tides and great bores, and the immense importance of and consequent volume of traffic to the port of Calcutta, one hundred and thirty miles from its mouth, called for really first-class men. The Port Authority knew where to get them!

Cadets between the ages of fourteen and sixteen and to the number of about one hundred per year are taken by the *Worcester*, and at the comparatively modest cost of one hundred guineas per annum, a very thorough technical education is provided, while general education is by no means neglected.

The scholastic curriculum consists of English, Literature, French, Latin, Algebra, Euclid, Geography, History, Meteorology, Drawing, Steam, Deviascope, Magnetism, Theory and Practice of Plane and Spherical Trigonometry, of Navigation and of Nautical Astronomy. In addition, every branch of seamanship possible on a ship moored in the Thames is taught, and a very high standard of discipline is maintained, mainly through the cadets themselves as a preparation for their responsibilities to come.

The class of boys is that of the ordinary public school, and there is an esprit de corps and tradition amongst past and present pupils equal to that of any of the great educational institutions.

But I must not let this become a chapter of puff advertisement. Not only is one likely to spread oneself concerning the two happiest years of life, but I would seize this opportunity

to correct a very false impression that seems amazingly general. Often have I boasted, yes, that is the word, boasted of being an old *Worcester* boy, and poor ignorant fools have raised their eyebrows and assumed a look of pathetic encouragement as if, under pressure, I had pleaded guilty to spending two years on a reformatory ship.

I was also at one of the biggest Public Schools, and there is no doubt that the *Conway* and the *Worcester* rank as two of the best and most important educational institutions in the Empire. And that's that.

## CHAPTER III

### A CADET

**F**AR from feeling lonely or homesick, I was delighted when my parents stepped into the gig and went ashore. Not only were a number of boys, judged capable of boarding the ship safely without the fussy assistance of parents, looking at me with an expression of conscious superiority bordering on contempt, but I was keen to scamper round and thoroughly explore this majestic old hulk.

On the forecastle I found water tanks and other sanitary equipment, the upper deck was clear for recreation and drill, and the main deck furnished with desks and all the impedimenta of school. Down below on the lower deck were stretched innumerable hammocks and black sea-chests arranged in very straight lines, and down even yet found me on the orlop deck, where I discovered a port on to the landing-platform, the library, the bathrooms and the gymnasium. Farther forward there were some boats and ropes and the pleasant penetrating smell of stockholm tar and manilla rope.

After a thorough inspection, punctuated with short rests when I sat down to indulge in gorgeous day-dreams, I decided to return to the upper deck to do a bit of swaggering about before the unfortunates whose parents had not yet gone ashore.

While I was half-way up a ladder an Instructor, commonly called Old Mug, not with any dis-



respect but simply as an abbreviation of his surname, suddenly appeared at the top, and with a very red face and immensely distended cheeks blew a shrill blast on a boatswain's whistle and roared :

"All lands fall in and break your neck."

That is exactly as it sounded to me, and I stood there gaping and absolutely fascinated by this hero. Fancy ! he had really been to sea. I wondered if he had killed many pirates, and I bet he was tattooed all over and I'd ask him to show me it one day.

An avalanche of cadets shot down the ladder and swept me along the main deck. I asked the nearest boy what was the matter, a fire or something, and he said :

"Divisions. All hands fall in on the main deck."

Everybody seemed to know exactly where to go except me, but after a lot of "get out of this—go away, you annoy me—you are not here, you little beast"—I fell into line with a lot of cadets.

"Divvy-shun. SCHUNNNNN !"

"A shoe ware. Smarter than that. Divvy-shun. SCHUNN !"

It all meant nothing to me, but I just followed the lead of the cadets around me, and as nobody took any notice of me I felt safe enough to take a lively interest in the proceedings.

"Cadets are posted to tops as follows—Fo'c'sle Starboard. Cadets Brooke, Deane, Ridley, Davies . . ."

A very fat Chief Instructor was shouting this out, and every time he called a name a cadet doubled smartly across to another section of the deck. At last my name was called and I galloped over to where all the other cadets whose names had followed "Mizzen Port" were standing.

This division into Tops is simply a convenient disciplinary measure. There are ten tops, each consisting of about twenty boys. Starboard and Port watches each have five tops, viz. Fo'c'sle, Fore, Main, Mizzen and Afterguard, and the boys are more or less "sized" along the deck, the biggest boys being in the Fo'c'sles and the smallest in the Afterguards. New cadets are usually herded into the Mizzens for their first term. Each top is controlled by a senior boy with the rank of Petty Officer, and other senior boys fill such privileged positions as Chief Petty Officer and Captain of the Boats.

When Divisions is piped the cadets fall in on the main deck in double file, the tops being a few feet apart, and the petty officer stands about two yards in front and faces his top.

"Petty Officerrrrs will report."

The petty officers then count their tops, and in order of seniority march up to the Chief Instructor and salute, saying:

"All correct, sir. Twenty present, sir."

Finally the Chief Instructor marches up and salutes the Commander and reports:

"All correct, sir. One hundred and ninety-eight cadets present, sir."

The Commander then gets on with the business for which the divisions were piped, and then :

"Deevy-shuns. SCHUNNN! Dismiss."

Gee! it was great. Just wait until I had time to write to Arthur about this. Following the others I went down to the lower deck and was mightily interested in all the hammocks, and finally found my sea-chest at the head of one. A big fat cadet was sitting on the next chest, and he said :

"What do we do now?"

"I don't know, I've only just come on board."

"So have I."

Another new cadet strolled up and said :

"Let's go on shore."

"*Ashore*," I gasped, "ashore! I never want to go on shore again, do you? And I don't suppose we are allowed to, anyway."

"Well, let's have a look round then."

We ambled along the deck, and up by the fo'c'sle a cadet shouted :

"Here, you, push my chest straight."

"Me?"

"Yes, *you*."

"I'll push your face straight if you order me about."

Four cadets suddenly leapt at me and together with the other new cadets I was hurled to the deck and unmercifully hammered. We learnt later that we had committed a very serious offence. It has been a tradition of the ship for years that *any* boy who has been there a year may "fag" *any* boy who has not. This is a

cast-iron law, and it is no good any new boy kidding himself that he will not be fagged, for he will soon have more than half the ship's company only too delighted to help him to see the error of his ways. It sounds a funny scheme, but it is a magnificent idea, full of majestic wisdom as soon as you have finished your first year.

My new friends were Rideout, who was forthwith nicknamed "Bruno" because of his size and strength, and Feltham, who was called "She." His initials were S. H. F. and one of the old boys added the extra stroke to the F on his sea-chest, and hence his name. As there were a number of cadets who had been at school with me I carried on with my old name of "Jacker."

We soon got into the swing of the daily round, and every passing day only made life more happy and healthy. For my taste, at first, there appeared to be too much time wasted on study, but every now and then there were such great treats as washing down the decks, boat or fire drill, or going ashore for the letters. Dad had always been lecturing me about my devotion to sports at the expense of my school work, but it came in very useful, for in July I scrambled home first in the swimming championship and was exempted from fagging, as was the unwritten law for all who were lucky enough to get their colours or win a championship. I could not be fagged, but I could not fag, which took a lot of the guilt off the gingerbread.

One of the Instructors was known as "Pinkey"



because his voice used to break at the crucial moment, more especially when he was excited or angry. A crowd of us were sitting about the main deck yarning, when one of the old boys told us that Pinkey was a great hero and had lots of medals and decorations. He said he got one side of his "stern" shot off in the battle of Alexandria and he now had a cork starboard side. He said one day Pinkey fell down and slid along the causeway, and he went faster and faster, until at last that cork bit was set on fire and all hands were piped to fire drill.

We said we did not believe a word of it, but he swore it was true and said that you could stick a sail-needle into him and he would not notice it. A new cadet, Phillips, was spell-bound by this wonderful story and said he was going to write to his father and tell him the sort of heroes that were at this school. He said Sherborne was a wash-out, every master there was entire.

A little later we were out at rowing practice, and in his "spell" Phillips found himself in the stern sheets sitting on Pinkey's starboard side. He had not got a sail-needle, but he suddenly plunged an ordinary pin into Pinkey, and that startled mariner let out a yell and leapt into the air. But if Pinkey was surprised, it was as nothing compared with Phillips. Pinkey picked him up and shook him like a dog shakes a rat and then threw him back into the seat.

"What d'ye mean by it, you little murderer?"

"I thought it was cork, sir."

"Cork ! thought it was cork."

"They said it was, sir."

"Who said it was ? "

But Phillips was far too manly or far too wise to give *any* old boy away, so he said :

"I dreamt they said it was, sir."

"Well, now you can dream your liberty will be stopped."

As time went on I was promoted into the navigation classes, and suddenly took a great interest in school work. It had never appeared to me to be of much moment how long C would take to mow a field if A had already done it in two days. I did not care if he never did it anyway. But this was different. When I discovered that by looking at the sun through a sextant and taking a reading you could really find your position on the earth's surface, well, there was some sense in that, and I settled down to get on with work that had suddenly become of fascinating and all-absorbing interest, and as a natural result I progressed in a way that pleased, but a trifle mystified, my father.

The master of the First Nautical Division was affectionately called "Noodle," though he was far from possessing any of the defects that the word usually implies. He was an ideal master with just that touch of humour necessary to endear him to all his pupils, and he had a way with him that made it seem unfair or unpatriotic, or even worse than that, not to do your very best all the time.

He used to look over our evening work just

before morning school commenced, and, first thing, he would run over the papers and point out mistakes. He used to call us all Professor, and he would come in and begin in his deep, sonorous voice :

“ Ha-ha. Professor Hamilton finds his good ship in the middle of the Sahara Desert. How do you account for that, Professor ? ”

“ I must have looked up the wrong logarithm, sir.”

“ So. Pleasant news for the Admiralty. Captain looked up the wrong logarithm and the biggest battleship is gone. Consoling thought for a passenger sinking for the third time. Captain looked up the wrong logarithm. You must NOT look up wrong logarithms. Work it over again.”

“ Professor Feltham is not satisfied with the present compass, so he has invented a new one and he puts North next to South. And the result of his handiwork is that his position has no intelligible meaning to anybody. Can you explain this new instrument of yours, Professor ? ”

“ I . . . I . . . I . . . ”

“ Yes, I know. I . . . I . . . tiddley . . . I . . tie, eh ? Write out the points again, fifty times.”

On Mondays euclid was always the first subject, and we were supposed to have gone through the problem on the previous Friday evening. Noodle would come in with the book close to his very short-sighted eyes and say :

"Euclid, book six, proposition eleven, Professor Colmore to the board."

Colmore would trot out to the blackboard and, taking a piece of chalk, draw the diagram and rush off as if he knew it.

"Let  $AB$  be equal to  $YZ$  and . . ."

"*Let*, Professor, that is what we have to prove. Professor Colmore has at last found out how to square the circle. LET the circle be squared! Go on, now."

"Then  $AB$  being bisected at  $C$  and . . . and . . ."

"Yes? And what?"

"And the triangle being equal in area to this . . ."

"THIS, which this? Professor Phillips, out and assist this dunderhead."

Phillips would come out and get through the problem somehow, and be held up to Colmore as an example to follow. Noodle was a great believer in a spirit of friendly rivalry, and next time Phillips got into difficulties Colmore would be the first to get the chance to put him right.

It was not always like this, of course. Noodle was intolerant of all laziness and carelessness, but he would sit for hours, in or out of school, to explain and patiently re-explain any difficult problems, and would not be satisfied until he was sure that you had grasped the essentials.

Every now and then the fresh-water tanks were filled through a pipe from the shore, and Mug used to superintend this job by bellowing through a megaphone to the man at the turn-



cock ashore. One day Noodle was explaining a really difficult part of theoretical spherical trigonometry, and it went like this :

"The point to be kept clearly in your minds is . . ."

"Turn the water off."

" . . . that you are supposed to be at the centre of the sphere, and it is obvious that from there you would . . ."

"TURN THE WATER OFF."

"Pay attention here, Professor Rideout. Mr. Muggeridge is managing that job very well by himself. From the centre the lines would naturally be . . ."

"Ashore there."

" . . . far more regular than if you were situated at a point removed from the sphere entirely. Having grasped this, you can easily . . ."

"TURN IT OFF . . . OFF . . . OFF."

Noodle paused and then told us to follow him, and we marched up to the astonished Mug on the upper deck, and Noodle said :

"Is it off?"

"Yes, Mr. Urquhart."

"Then we can get on with our work."

And we all gravely marched back to our seats again.

Every now and then a party of cadets were selected to go to Chatham to be a sort of body-guard to some big Naval wig who was to launch a warship. I was one of such a party when the Prince of Wales, the present King, was perform-

ing this ceremony, and afterwards he inspected us, making a remark or two as he passed down the line. Dad was awfully pleased to read my letter about the long conversation I had with the Prince, who really said :

“ Are you going into the Navy ? ”

“ I expect to, Your Royal Highness.”

Practically the whole ship's company went up to London to line the streets at the Coronation of King Edward VII. Our section was from St. Thomas's Hospital to about one-third across Westminster Bridge. We got a fine view of the procession, and when the King and Queen drove slowly past, the Commander called for three hearty *Worcester* cheers, and they were hearty indeed. The King saluted and the Queen bowed, and it amounted to something to be a cadet that day.

There was a smallpox scare about the time we were due to return to the ship one term, and my mother's last words, as she saw me off at Cannon Street, were :

“ You had better smoke as soon as you get to Erith.”

She need not have given me this, her first, permission to smoke, because we all did that before we left Cannon Street.

Cadet Madeley was mad because some old lady had rushed up to him at Paddington Station and said :

“ Porter, is this the right train for Exeter ? ”

“ So I said ‘ Yes ’ and bunged her into the Chester train and stood near the door until the

train started. She gave me fourpence, and when the train was moving well, I shouted 'Don't forget to change at Birmingham, mum.' Fancy the ignorant old devil taking me for a porter."

The relation of this episode attracted the attention of a stout, breezy-looking man sitting in one of the corner seats, and he very gravely said :

"And what are you, may I ask?"

Collectively we told him that we were Naval officers, and we were taking a flotilla of destroyers out to China to exterminate a troublesome band of pirates operating off that coast. We said they had killed a naval officer and the Admiralty had therefore picked a special crew of the very best men available to go out and do the job properly. These pirates were terribly cruel, but topping scrappers, but wait until we got out there, we'd soon keel-haul 'em, and they would be pretty sorry they had played the fool with *any* naval man. Of course some of us would probably never return, and so on.

The stout, breezy man listened to this story as if fascinated, and beyond a few "Ah's" and "Oh's" said nothing until we reached Dartford, where he got out, when he said :

"Well, good-bye. I see the *Worcester* boy is just as big a liar as when I was aboard."

The King gives a gold medal every year to the best cadet aboard the ship. It is a unique reward and possibly the only instance of pupils deciding the destination of a very valuable prize. The Staff choose five cadets as suitable aspirants

for the medal from the points of view of general conduct, academic progress and sportsmanship, and on the appointed day these five names are written on a blackboard and the remaining cadets vote. It is a secret ballot, as each boy writes only the name of his choice on a piece of paper, which he then folds up and delivers to the Master in charge. Not only is it a great honour to get this medal, but it carries with it a number of other prizes, and the lucky winner is given preference in some of the most important shipping concerns.

The senior cadets take it in turn to be Mate of the Deck. He has no school that day, takes his meals with the Commander, attends to all signals from passing vessels, controls the gangways, receives visitors, orders away gigs and jolly-boats and generally has a most interesting day.

Early in 1903 my father came down and interviewed the Commander about my future. He was undecided whether to have me transferred to the Navy Class definitely and so make me a competitor for one of the six annual promotions into the Royal Navy, or to send me away in the Merchant Service, and if the latter, should it be in sail or steam.

Just before he came down I got into a scrape that may have had considerable influence on the Commander's advice. The petty officers had a private cabin, and Bruno, Feltham and I, with a number of others who joined at the same time, were petty officers. We were still boys, never-



theless, and one evening we started playing hockey in this small cabin, using a safety inkpot as the ball.

The game was getting fast and furious and somebody looked up to see Mug's red face and staring, distended eyes peering through the skylight just as I scored a beautiful goal by sloshing the ball against the bulkhead, breaking it into fragments and splashing ink all over the cabin. Next morning Phillips, who was Chief Petty Officer, came in with a very long face and said :

"The Commander wishes to see the cadet responsible for this." And he waved his hand pathetically towards the bespattered walls.

"That is all of us," said Bruno.

"He said he knew who did it, anyway, and he emphasised the singular cadet."

"Jacker, my boy, you are for it. That old beast Mug must have split."

I duly presented myself before the Commander.

"Did you do that foolish trick?"

"Yes, sir."

"Why?"

"It was just a rag, sir."

"Do you not understand that your position as a petty officer in charge of other lads makes this a very serious matter. The silly trick itself is of no more importance than any other silly trick, but the serious part is the weakening of discipline, that is the discipline that *you* can maintain. Other cadets are not going to take

much notice of a petty officer who does that sort of thing.

"And you might remember that you are responsible for the Chief Petty Officer getting a very serious talking to about his capacity to maintain discipline. He was not there, but I want you to understand that these incidents have their effect, never mind who is there or who is not there. I want you to apologise personally to Phillips.

"I did not think of you when I saw the mess this morning, I suspected some one else, and I am very glad to find you man enough to own up and not beat about the bush. I am only advising you for your own good, although I should like you to repeat these remarks to the rest of the team" (he nearly smiled as he mentioned that word). "There is no question of punishment, but it is an incident that is likely to remain in my mind. That will do."

I whispered a thank you, and shot off the poop as fast as I could go, and at the bottom of the ladder I nearly ran into Old Mug. Not only had he not split, but when he saw me going up to the Commander he came along to try and hear how I got on. He said in a hoarse whisper:

"Is it all right?"

"Yes, sir."

"Who told him?"

"I did."

"That's good. I was afraid it was some one else. But it was a cracking shot, wasn't it?"

After the interview my father took me aside

and told me that the Commander had recommended the Merchant Service. He said that I lacked the full sense of discipline and that it might be a risk to send me into the Navy.

I introduced my father to my two great friends, Bruno and Feltham, and we told him that we were very keen to go off to sea together, and he said he would see what was offering as a result of a number of letters of introduction given to him by the Commander, and if it was possible he would so arrange it.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE FIRST VOYAGE

**A**T last the day arrived when "Bruno," Feltham, who grew out of his early nickname of "She," and I, accompanied by a squad of fathers, uncles and friends, attended an office in Old Broad Street, and in a few minutes the necessary documents were completed and we had got our feet, through the medium of the blessed system of apprenticeship, upon the threshold of The Romance of the Sea.

And it looked like starting off well too, for the owner explained that the captain's absence from the meeting was due to the ship being loaded earlier than was at first anticipated and it might be necessary for us to join the ship from a tug off Dover. Gee! wouldn't the *Worcester* cadets just curl up with envy if they could see us doing that? To our great disappointment there was time for us to make the much less exciting journey to Hamburg via the Hook of Holland, the passage being made on the *Berlin* that broke in half with great loss of life a few years later. We got aboard at 8 p.m. on the first Saturday in March, 1903, and at 5 a.m. on Sunday a tug came alongside and we cast off and towed out of dock into the Elbe.

We were a bit surprised at the absence of fuss when we arrived, for we were left to creep around the decks for a few minutes, and then all that happened was: a Finnish sailor, who was acting night-watchman, said, "You vas apprentices



ain't it? Aft you go mit all the officers." We found our cabin, a dark hole about twelve feet square with four bunks, a bench and a table in it, and in there was Bansforth, the other apprentice, sitting crouched up on the bench and looking the personification of misery. He said, "I am glad you've come. I got here this morning and have done a day's work. The mate has told me five times to get to hell out of it, the second mate told me, only once, to go away as I made him sick, the boatswain is not over polite and even the cook got quite uppish because *he* had forgotten to cook any grub, said nobody told him I was coming, and just as I came in here a sailor advised me to get a good sleep as I might not get any more. Cheerful sort of place this is, I can tell you."

The *Spindrift* was a full-rigged ship carrying skysail yards, her main truck being about 180 feet above the water. She was 315 feet long, 40 feet in the beam, draught when loaded of 24 feet, with a registered tonnage of 2,239, and a carrying capacity of 3,400 tons. The crew consisted of the Captain, two mates, four apprentices, boatswain and his mate, sailmaker, carpenter, steward, cook, sixteen able-seamen and four ordinary seamen or boys.

The Captain, or "old man" or skipper, was a "blue-nose," the universal nautical term for a Nova-Scotian. He was a real hard case, a magnificent sailorman, as strong and courageous as a lion, a stickler for discipline and etiquette and a veritable king of all he surveyed, a brute

to everybody under him, but a man nobody hated. Just sheer admiration and a strong desire instantly to obey were the only emotions he stirred.

The mates were English ; the first, the son of a butcher and once an apprentice in Smithfield market, was nicknamed "Guts," while the second, because his father kept a boot-shop, was called "Boots." These pseudonyms were not used in conversation with them.

The crew, like all crews shipped on British ships out of foreign ports, was a weird assortment. The bos'un was a "down-easter" Yank standing about six feet three and about the only man aboard likely to trouble the skipper in a scrap ; his mate was an Englishman with a ferocious hatred of everything and everybody connected with steamships. The rest consisted of Germans, Finns, Swedes, Norwegians, one Italian, and last but by no means least, one Liverpool-Irishman.

None of us had any real idea of the functions of an apprentice, and disregarding Bansforth's first-day experience and relying on our two years as cadets, we assumed that we mainly walked the poop in brassbound, with a telescope under our arms taking the sun at noon, etc. Relying on this being correct, on the Sunday we dressed very smartly in our best uniform and put on stiff collars. Bansforth's sea-chest was next to mine, and noticing me get out a stiff collar, he said, "God ! are you going to put *that* on ?" I replied that I was, and he burst out laughing.

It was an unmusical, sinister sort of a laugh, but I asked for its cause in vain.

The mate saw me directly I stepped out on deck. He stopped dead, spat heavily and shifted his "chew," wiped the back of his hands across his lips and said :

"Hallo, what are you, a —— admiral?"

"No-o-o, I am an apprentice."

"Are yew? Well, down below and coil up that hawser."

"Oh! but I don't *think* I have come here to coil up ropes."

"Haven't you, by God; then you'll do little else while I'm mate. And did you ever hear a word called sir?"

As I climbed down the ladder I heard the mate say :

"Well, I *am* damned, here's another," and very soon poor old Bruno was running forward to get some bath-brick and oil for his first lesson in cleaning brasswork. The mate was as good as his word in my case, and used to go around the decks throwing down ropes and sending for me to coil them up, until I could do it so neatly that even he did not like to disturb them.

When I came up, we were well under way down the Elbe, but I got little time to look at the scenery. After we passed Cuxhaven a fresh breeze and a nice little sea brought the colour to our cheeks and energy to our limbs, and we four boys declared that the sea was not a mockery after all, but that it was just grand and manly. In a few hours we were hurling our dinners over

the lee rail and looking for a place to lie down and die comfortably. Sea-sickness is a funny thing, you start by being afraid that you are going to die and finish with a great fear that you will not die. About four o'clock the watches were picked in the usual way.

Each watch is on four hours and off four hours, except for the two-hour dog-watches in the evening, from port to port.

The mate stands one side of the deck and the second mate the other, while the crew are congregated a little distance away, and the selection is carried out as follows, a number of nicknames being conferred in the process. The mate, being senior, has the first choice ; the sailmaker and carpenter, and of course the steward and cook, are not interested in this ceremony, as they are always on all day and in all night. The boatswain always goes to the starboard, or the mate's watch, while the bos'un's mate goes to the second mate.

" Boatswain, do you know any of these men ? " says the mate.

" No, sir."

" All the same, I suppose, no —— good."

" Mebbe, sir, to start with anyway." (A deft hint this.)

" Here—no, not you, that black man next the capstan."

A stalwart German with bushy black whiskers, and known after this as Black Peter, goes over to the mate's side, obviously well pleased with the honour of first selection.



The second then examined the men and called :  
“ Come on, you in the dungarees.”

And Dungaree Jack, the good-natured Finn who told us where our cabin was, goes to the port watch. And so it went on until all the able and ordinary seamen were allocated, and then the proper names of the men are recorded and sent in to the Captain, who comes to the poop rail and superciliously surveys all hands.

Much to our astonishment and indignation, the apprentices were placed in the same way. The mate said to the second, “ All about the same, second, eh ? but I’ll take the admiral here (me) and the other good-looking boy.” Feltham and I were in the mate’s, while Bruno and Plasmon were in the second’s watch. Bansforth was called Plasmon because his kind mother had sent him off to sea with about a dozen pounds of that famous chocolate.

Immediately after this we started to set sail preparatory to casting off the tow-boat. Two men went up each mast and, starting on the lower topsail yards, cast off the gaskets, threw the sails off the yards, and overhauled the buntlines and clewlines in order that those on deck could pull the sheets right home.

The lower topsail is set by simply hauling out the sheets to the lower yard-arm, but the upper topsail yard hoists up and so stretches the sail. Our fore and main upper topsail yards weighed about three tons each, and hoisting them was a job for all hands. The fall is led through a snatch block along the deck, and all hands clap on, while

one loud-voiced sailor strikes up a "chanty." These chanties are often very musical and help wonderfully, although the words are usually pretty crude. There is a verse and a chorus and there are two pulls in each line of the chorus, thus :

" Oh, some like whisky and some like gin,  
Whisky (pull), Johnny (pull) ;  
But I like almost any ruddy thing,  
Oh, whisky (pull) for Johnny (pull).

" Oh, whisky killed my sister Sue,  
Whisky . . . Johnny ;  
I don't give a damn if it kills me too,  
Oh, whisky . . . for Johnny."

The above is the worst one I know, but it was also the first one I ever heard. Sometimes, especially in a nearly blown-out gale, all hands cannot pulley-haul a topsail yard owing to the wind pressure and the heavy rolling, and so the fall is led along to a capstan, and a capstan chanty is sung, such as—

" Come on, boys, and hoist this topsail  
And the canvas we will rip,  
But right away to merry England  
We will sail this gallant ship—  
Rolling home, rolling home, rolling home across  
the sea,  
Rolling home to merry England, rolling home  
dear land to thee.

“ Up aloft amidst the rigging  
Cries the fresh exulting gale,  
Straining every spar and backstay  
And every stitch in every sail—  
Rolling home, etc.”

Rolling Home is reputed to have been composed by the famous Captain “ Hurricane ” Brown of the *Flying Cloud*, that holds the wonderful record of nearly five hundred statute miles in twenty-four hours. It was many years afterwards that this day’s run was beaten by a steamer.

Our sails were all set in about an hour, and then the tow-boat gave three short hoots and we let go her towline. A moderate north-east breeze was blowing and she was soon on her course doing eight knots. Well, surely *now* our work was finished. All sail set, ropes coiled away, hatches battened down, what else *could* there be to do? And here was a huge Nord Deutscher Lloyd boat passing.

“ Starboard watch on deck, port watch below.”

The mate bellowed this from the poop, and whatever this meant I was on deck, anyway. The bos’un came aft and took a lot of orders from the mate, who then turned to where Feltham and I were leaning over the rail.

“ Here.”

“ Sir.”

“ Can you steer? ”

“ No, sir.”

“ Can’t steer! What the devil *did* they teach you on that battleship then? ”

" Oh, navigation, astronomy, deviascope and all sorts of things like that, sir."

" You won't want that stuff for at least three years. Can you clean brasswork ? "

" *Oh no, sir.*"

" Oh, but we will, sir ! Pigsties, hencoops, your cabin ? "

" Not yet, sir."

" That's better ; be willing, my boys, that's half the battle. The other half is hard work. Can you furl a sail ? "

" Oh yes, sir, and send down spare spars and yards, and splice wire and everything like that, sir."

The mate blew a shrill blast on his whistle and shouted :

" Clew up the mizzen royal."

Three men ran up on the poop, lowered the royal yard and hauled up the gear, and the mate sent us aloft to take in the sail. Going aloft nearly two hundred feet in a ship at sea is a very different thing to the same performance on a wooden-wall firmly moored in the Thames, but we got up all right and laid out one each side of the yard and started work. The sail seemed alive and very spiteful, for every time we had it rolled up ready to pass the gaskets round, it would flap up and break loose. We were over an hour at the job, but when we did finish, it was a first-class man-of-war furling and we felt proud of it. We got down to find the mate fuming ; he said any boy could have done the job in ten minutes single-handed and he would " learn " us to do the same. So he did.



We soon settled down to the ordinary routine of sailing-ship life, trimming yards and sails as necessary, washing down decks and paintwork, overhauling all the gear aloft, tarring the anchors and cables and generally cleaning everything that could be cleaned, and repairing everything that could be repaired, and then doing it all over again. Although it often taxed their ingenuity to the utmost, the mates never failed to keep every man in their watches busy, day in and day out, at sea or in port.

Even at night when the watch on deck is only expected to keep alert and handy, and usually spend their time under the lee of a deckhouse, smoking and yarning, the mate used to call up the watch to tighten a brace that was already taut, or to take a strain on a sheet well home. Three years later when I was at the wheel coming up the Channel, homeward bound, and when under ordinary circumstances I ought to get an officer's ticket in a few weeks and could therefore talk to him freely, I asked the mate why he did this, and he said :

“ Thirty years ago, when I was a boy before the mast on the *Silver King*, a few days out from Philadelphia with case-oil for China, the man at the wheel had a fit, swallowed his ‘ chew ’ or something, and before the mate could get assistance the man was choked to death and the ship veered round and all aback. Of course, the mate made a mistake, he should have taken the wheel and not troubled about the man, but he was a very nervous young man anyway.

That little shamozzle cost us two sprung masts and a lot of sails beside the sailor, while the mate's hair turned grey when the 'old man' gave his opinion about it. I learnt a lot of language and some seamanship then, and I've forgotten none of it. You take my advice and *see* that your watch is awake every now and then."

Cause and effect! Behold that thirty-year-old chew of tobacco being responsible for a number of sleepy, peaceful old shell-backs turning into cursing and blasphemous grouzers as they chased around the decks every hour or so.

We passed within two miles of Dover on the next Sunday morning, and I sat all my watch *below* watching the shore slip by, wishing I was dead, or on shore, or not at sea anyway, and gravely wondering if I would ever see home again. But day after day went by with the same but never monotonous round, and once home and sea-sickness had passed off, and sea-legs were a reality instead of some vain imagination, we boys simply overflowed with good health and spirits.

We reached the Doldrums in twenty-seven days. The Trade wind blew itself out and we ran into a calm that was absolutely uncanny. For days the sea was actually as smooth as glass, and an empty salt-pork cask thrown over the side was in sight for *three* days. The skipper used impatiently to stamp up and down between the steering and binnacle compasses, every now and then ejecting a firmament-obliterating erup-

tion of profanity. He had an extraordinary habit of talking aloud. At first I thought this was the usual weakness, but one day at the wheel I discovered he was holding an imaginary yet very real conversation with God, such as this :

“ Yes, I know, *I know*, it’s all calm and beautiful where You are. I wouldn’t mind if I was on a golden throne either. You’ve got no — owners to report to, a few weeks don’t matter in eternity, but what am I to say? Will *You* be there to tell them about this — calm? I bet if the Devil had *his* way it would be blowing a — hurricane right astern now, but then he don’t listen to *prayer* any more than You do, and when You do send a breeze it’ll be right ahead.” Then he would leap into the air and let out a regular war-whoop and start all over again. He looked upon a head wind or a calm as deliberately sent by God as a personal affront to him, and he used to talk to Him just as he would to a common sailor about some fault. Indeed, I have given a very mild example of a heavenly lecture, even though the blanks be filled in with a different swear-word every time.

All sailors blaspheme in a most extraordinary fashion, and it is very difficult to convey any idea of the truth without grave risk of giving offence. I was amazed, for blasphemy had always been to me the greatest of sins. At school and at home it was sternly repressed, and a thrashing for saying “ Oh, crumbs ” emphasised the wickedness. It was a lot to expect a

boy of twelve to know that this youthful expression was derived from the Sacrament, all the same.

It all means nothing to the sailor. He is a strong man doing a strong man's work, has a strong stomach to deal with strong food and strong drink, and naturally likes his language strong too. One other illustration will suffice before we dismiss the subject for good.

The bos'un was a past-master at the game. He used to apostrophise his Maker, in typical American nomenclature, as "Jesus W. Christ," and he told me that the W. stood for William. One pitch-dark night in a terrific squall all hands were lined along the foreyard struggling with a mad foresail that fought like a live beast to retain its liberty. It flapped its heavy wire bolt ropes around on to our frozen hands and tore our finger nails as it battered us and clamoured for its freedom. Finally we had to cut the sail from the bolt ropes and let it blow away, and when that is done with a foresail it is blowing hard enough to mean the sail or the ship goes. Every man on that yard knew well enough that any moment might be the last.

While we were struggling, a terrific flash of lightning "sizzed" down right before our eyes, and instantaneously followed an ear-splitting crash of thunder, and immediately after was heard the bos'un's voice in :

"That's right, Billy Christ, show us a light !"

To him this was a perfectly natural "thank you" for a favour conferred, and was in reality



no more sinful than our "Oh, bother it." Just his method of expression, that's all, however distasteful to those not used to it.

Our appetites increased with the steadiness of our sea-legs, and, never mind how much there was, we found that there never was quite enough grub to satisfy us, and this led to a weird campaign for the spoils. This consisted of turning conversation, or making remarks calculated to put the others off their food entirely, the victor forthwith collaring the vanquished's share.

Plasmon would taste the soup first, and spluttering it all about would leap to his feet and shout something about arsenic :

"My God, don't you touch it, it's terrible. I thought that durned cook looked black at me when I saw him with a small phial in his hand. Look, pour it all back and I'll take it back and chuck it at him."

An attack like this was usually nipped in the bud by the offer to drink his share if he was afraid of it.

"Look at that, that's not a currant, that's a blackbeetle in that duff. Look, Bruno, see where it's all squashed out here ; golly, he must have been a fat dropsical brute. Weighed a pound, I bet. You don't think it is ?—well, you can have it in your whack then. I *know* it is. When I was painting the skylight I saw the cook chasing it. Heavens, and look at this. Is it ? Yes, by gum it is. One of that grub-spoiler's teeth. That bit you think is an almond."



But it was mutually, though silently, agreed that it was a hopeless task, when one nippy day Feltham came down from the wheel and said he was looking forward to that cockroach soup, and he did not mind if there were a few toenails in it too.

## CHAPTER V

### ROUND THE HORN

EVERYBODY had a turn at fishing for bonito, sometimes called electric fish, owing to its extraordinary muscular activity. It is impossible to hold one of these fish with the naked hands, for its movements are so rapid and powerful that it is like trying to withstand an electric shock.

A sack is placed at the end of the bowsprit and the fisherman sits out there in the chains using a piece of white rag as bait. The rag is played to make it jump from and skim the water like a flying fish, and the bonito swims around and surveys the bait for some time and then he makes a flashing leap and catches the rag as much as ten feet above the water, and is no doubt considerably astonished to find *that* flying fish has a nasty steel backbone that has gone clean through his upper lip. He is hauled up and dropped into the bag, and in due course Slushy will be seen sitting outside the galley, on an upturned saucepan, busily cleaning half a dozen fine fish to make a pleasant change in the salt-junk diet for all hands.

Flying fish are most in evidence in a short, choppy sea, when they leap in shoals from the crest of a wave and skim gracefully a few inches above the water for perhaps a hundred feet. Most of them are very small, three or four inches only, but now and again a big chap will be seen a foot or more in length, and plump in proportion,

and their capacity for distance-flying appears to correspond with their size. As they always fly straight away from the ship, it is extremely difficult to judge distances accurately, but two hundred yards would probably be the longest flying-fish flight on record.

On very calm nights we used sometimes to put a tarpaulin on two spreaders over the side, as close to the water as possible, and then lower a hurricane lantern or two to rest just above it. Sometimes we would find a few fish there in the morning, but as twelve flying fish wouldn't make a square meal for one man, and the catch seldom exceeded a dozen, it was difficult to get anybody to assist in rigging out the awkward gear. And as an additional deterrent there were always the threats of the mate as to what would happen if the tarpaulin got damaged or lost.

Sixteen days took us down to  $5^{\circ}$  South, and then we picked up the Trade wind again and boomed away down towards the dreaded Horn. Off Brazil we got into the tail of a "Pamperos," but as the weather was still warm, it was quite pleasant struggling about the rigging and getting washed around the decks. All ships carry three sets of sails, and the toughest of the lot is kept for round the Horn and midwinter North Atlantic, and about  $35^{\circ}$  South we got up our best "number nought" storm canvas and changed the sails.

Sixty days out found us off the coast of Staten Island, and very soon after that we had made sufficient southing to feel the full force of a

first-class copper-bottomed westerly gale. For several days we had been busy preparing to "turn the corner." All the hatches were re-battened down, spars and boats double lashed, skylights and ventilators covered with strong canvas covers, rigging and braces, buntlines, sheets and clewlines overhauled for chafings or weak strands, and life-lines run web-like all over the main deck. These lines are stretched between the rigging about seven feet from the deck and so closely together that whenever a big sea comes aboard, a man will have a line handy to jump for. "She shipped a heavy sea"—what land-lubber knows what that *really* means?

It is blowing a snorter and the watch are standing on the poop sheltered behind a tarpaulin spread in the weather mizzen rigging. The main deck is awash and the clang of the sea-ports letting the water out mingles with the seething crashes as the seas tumble aboard. The men are in their full warpaint, oilskins, sea-boots and sou'westers, and good spun-yarn "soul and body" lashings. Oilskin pants are put on *outside* the sea-boots, and at ankles, wrists and neck good lashings are placed so that if a man does get caught and rolled around the decks little or no water gets inside his clothing. This is very necessary, for a sailor's wardrobe is so scanty that he has his every garment on when rounding the Horn in winter time.

A screw has drawn or a hatch cover ripped and the watch clamber down with numbed fingers and ungainly figures to repair the damage. The

mate keeps his eye to windward and suddenly observes a grey-beard lift its curling head fifty feet clear of the dip and come rushing towards the ship with that uncanny speed that the wave that has not *quite* made up its mind to break always seems to acquire.

"Give her a few spokes to leeward," he shouts to the helmsman, and then "Look out on deck." Every man leaps for a life-line, slinging his legs up as well to avoid the sweep of water. The ship struggles to obey her helm and climb up into the wind a bit, and then as if giving up the job as hopeless, shudders and lurches heavily to windward, and a solid wall of water about fifteen feet high and her entire length comes crashing over the rail. She staggers under the terrific impact and then falls, giving a weird impression of outraged dignity, over to leeward as the weight of water passes across her. As she passes the perpendicular the mate who is hanging on to the poop rail with both hands sees only the forecastle-head and the poop, for the main deck looks just as the rest of the sea except where a few black shapes reveal the whereabouts of his watch clinging to the life-lines. Such a sea appears to jerk the captain from his cabin to the poop instantaneously, for he is always to be seen casting an anxious eye aloft as she rolls to leeward, sometimes to wet her lower yard-arms, for if any gear breaks, then it may mean disaster.

Buckets and all other movable objects go slamming and banging around the decks, while



the braces washing in and out of the sea-ports get tied into the most astonishing knots, and often several hours' work is necessary to undo the mischief of one heavy sea.

The squalls in this district are of extraordinary violence. A gale *in* a gale is a fitting description, and although we carried no wind-speed recording instruments, judging by experience in gales ashore when wind speed has been observed and recorded, a velocity of one hundred miles per hour is not uncommon. There is a reliable old saw concerning squalls :

With the rain before the wind  
Topsail halyards you must mind ;  
But with the wind before the rain  
You may set your sails again.

Directly a squall is observed the order is given : "Stand by topsail halyards." The upper topsail is set by hoisting the three-ton yard some eighteen or twenty feet and so stretching the sail, the sheets or lower corners being shackled to the lower topsail yard or secured by a chain passing through the lower yard-arm and down to the deck. The upper yard also has downhauls, wire ropes running from the yard-arm to the deck, for so terrific is the force of the wind at times that though the halyards be loose the yard has to be pulled down. It seems incredible that any wind could hold up that three-ton yard, but no sailing ship has ever been to sea unless fitted with topsail-yard downhauls.

When the order is given, the crew take their

positions at braces, downhauls and halyards, the man at the latter keeping his eye on the officer on the poop, who is watching the rapidly approaching squall, and from the surface commotion or the flight of birds endeavouring to estimate its violence. Sometimes the angriest-looking squall will pass harmlessly by or even turn out to be a calm oasis in the desert of the gale, but at other times the wind leaps at the ship like a demon, the note in the rigging shrieks to a higher key and she appears to cringe down into the sea to avoid the onslaught.

The mate makes the signal and down come the yards, and then every man remains at his post until the next order is given. Meanwhile the mate hanging on to the rail with both hands will give an order to the helmsman to ease the ship a little and watch the squall develop. Sometimes a squall will exhaust itself in a few minutes and then the order, "Set the upper topsails," rings along the deck, but at other times the squall is a precursor of a steadily stronger blow, and then, "Up aloft, all hands, and furl the upper topsails," and the ungainly oilskin-clad figures go slowly up the weather rigging and lay out along the yard, and to time set by the bos'un, usually by means of some lewd chanty, will slowly roll up that slamming, battering monster and secure it with innumerable gaskets passed round sail and yard.

It may be wondered why the risk is run and the full intensity of the blow awaited before orders are issued, but with sailing ships, just as

much as steamers, the one idea is to get her from port to port in the shortest possible time. And again the most experienced mariner cannot tell exactly what is in a squall until it arrives, and a nervous captain or mate, especially off the Horn in winter time, would soon have his entire crew exhausted if he took in sail every time a squall blackened the weather horizon.

Sailors often refer to ship-masters as "devils to carry on." This means that they never ordered a sail of any sort to be taken in until to permit it to remain set any longer would be foolishly to endanger the sail and the spars, the lives of the men who must at last clamber aloft and handle the canvas, and even the safety of the ship.

In the days of the famous and stirring races between the tea and wool clippers from China and Australia many a sail was kept set until it was blown clean out of the bolt ropes, but the rewards and the honour of record passages were sufficient to explain, if not justify, such mad carrying-on. This was in fact bad seamanship, and generally it is fine to see the skill and care with which a good officer will nurse his ship, his sails and his crew. A great deal depends, naturally, upon the age and the strength of the ship's gear, but it is astonishing, as we did on one occasion, to pass another ship under reefed topsails, while we were booming merrily along with every stitch, except the royals, set taut in a favourable gale.

Large numbers of Mother Carey's chickens

used to swim about close up to the lee side. They are pretty fluffy little birds, a good deal smaller than an ordinary gull, and are quite remarkable in that they never fight for food. From a tubful of potato peelings and other refuse thrown overboard each bird would select a piece, and if there was not enough to go round, the unlucky ones would swim philosophically about with never an attempt to steal or snatch from their luckier companions. We caught a number with the usual booby bait of a piece of white rag, and it was curious to observe that directly their feet touched the deck they were violently seasick. Several times, in fact, for they wasted no time in continually putting the meal back into its proper receptacle.

As with the albatross, sailors would never harm these birds, and after their amazing experience on deck they were carefully dropped over the side again.

The flight of an albatross is a superb spectacle. He never beats his wings, spreading some ten feet, even to rise into the air, but sails in a series of undulating and majestic curves. He will race past only a few feet from the poop rail with thrumming wings and eyes alert for stray pieces of food, sweep gracefully out perhaps a quarter of a mile to starboard, rising steadily all the time, and then banking steeply turn in a wide curve and swoop down and past the ship's stern and away out to port to repeat the manoeuvre.

Sometimes an albatross will so follow a ship



for days. His control despite his terrific speed is marvellous. As he swoops down he spies a piece of succulent fat pork floating astern, and with no apparent effort and at the same speed he dips down and then soars up with that piece of pork, and only just the tip of his beak has got wet. The captain used to stand near the wheel box and throw out bits of biscuit as he saw the bird coming in, and very seldom were they missed. If a piece was missed or broke in two as he snapped it, with just a flirt of his wings he would whirl round in a small circle and be away out again with the biscuit without any speed reduction or inconvenience.

For six weeks we battered our way slowly westward under reefed topsails and fore topmast staysail only. In twenty-two hours she would make perhaps forty miles to windward in the teeth of a heavy gale, only to lose twenty of it every time the skipper "wore" her, because she had run too far to the south or the north.

Midwinter, June 23, found us in sight of the Horn, and the same afternoon she shipped a dollop that burst in the galley doors and washed the cursing cook and all his pots and pans out into the lee scuppers. The range was hove against the bulkhead and reduced to scrapiron, and for the three weeks following not a scrap of warm food was available. And it was much too cold to remove any clothes, even oilskins, when we turned in on our watch below. Everybody had sea cuts—the sailor has a less polite term for these—when the finger-joints split



sometimes right down to the bone through the intense cold and constant wet, and a handsome crop of sea boils where the soul-and-body lashings chafed the flesh. The men were too sick and exhausted even to grouse, except when a boil got knocked.

During one particularly heavy squall the upper rigging suddenly became illuminated with St. Elmo's fire and a deep plaintive note crept into the howl of the wind. The mate told us that the uncanny moaning sound was the wind whistling amongst the icebergs to the southward, but the bos'un said the fire was the eyes and the noise the groans of all the fools who had been lost off the Horn. He said any man who went round the Horn twice deserved to be lost anyway, but he had been round about thirty times. Once on the *Sea King* he was at the wheel when a heavy sea came aboard and washed the entire watch over the side. It was too rough to think of lowering a boat or heaving-to, and he and the mate leant over the poop rail and watched them drift astern and drown. Just to cheer us up he said that it was a night like this too.

A hundred days out from Hamburg, when Black Peter was at the wheel, the wind suddenly veered round to the south and so became a strong gale right astern. The skipper gave Peter a bottle of rum as "a present for *bringing* a fair wind." Peter did not get much of the rum, but he honestly believed he was remotely responsible for doing some noble action, and he very soon got a few scars as a memento of a short but sharp educa-

tional course at the hands of the rest of the crew, who undertook to "learn" him to put and keep his light under a bushel.

We soon ran up into warmer weather, and for a week the rigging was bedecked with shirts and other washing flapping in the breeze, oilskins were re-oiled, sea-boots dried out, and everybody looked more cheerful every day. Despite our heavy battering we had suffered little damage, a few screws were stripped, a few lashings gone, a few boat covers ripped off, but otherwise the grand old "tub" was as seaworthy as ever. Twenty days brought us up to the equator, and then we started painting and holystoning to have her looking smart when we entered San Francisco. I got the soft job of painting and blocking the letters on the boats and lifebuoys, work that elevated me to the level of an artist and well above the driving eye of the bos'un.

A bitter feud that had sprung up between the bos'un and the cook about this time reached a crisis. At eight bells the cook handed out a fearsome mess of bits of fat pork and mouldy potatoes floating about in lukewarm greasy water, and the bos'un said:

"What the hell *is* this?"

"Dat was a fine Hamburger hash."

The bos'un hurled dish and all at the cook's head. The cook's chin was badly cut and he rushed aft, howling, to complain to the skipper, with blood, greasy water and lumps of fat all about him. The "old man" listened patiently to the cook's hysterical outburst and then shouted

for the bos'un. I was at the wheel and mightily interested, for the skipper looked very angry.

"What's all this about?"

"We've been dished up filth by that swine for three months and it was about time somebody kicked, so I done it."

"You did?"

"I did. . And I reckon it ought to be done every day until we get something we can eat."

"You'd get darned hungry, for it's all you'll get."

"Is that so? Well, I calculated the food was all right, but this ruddy squarehead here was a-spoiling it out of spite, or p'raps he *ain't* really a cook at all. But mebbe the food is . . ."

"Is what?"

". . . rotten to begin with."

"Well! suppose it is?"

"I'm sorry for old Slushy, but I ain't done kicking."

"Oh, *ain't* you," said the skipper, going closer to the bos'un, "and who're you going to kick next?"

"Mebbe the steward."

"The steward? *He* don't provision any ship *I* am captain of."

I nearly got the ship aback in my excitement. The bos'un did not know fear, but he had too much sense to start any sort of a scrap that the skipper could continue ashore in the law courts, and he delayed his move while he considered. He was a long time and the skipper was getting impatient, and apparently just for something to

do he turned to the pleased cook and electrified that worthy by booting him hard, right astern, and shouting :

"What the devil are you doing aft here? Get forward to hell out of this, you . . . you . . . you grub spoiler. *You* keep your eye on that compass." The grin slid off my face so fast that it nearly strained my neck.

"Well, it ain't no good argufying with you, Captain, but I'm just telling you that if we don't get good food you won't get good work, and what's more, you'll lose all your crew in 'Frisco."

This meant £3 per month per man extra, as this crowd was signed on out of Hamburg at £4 per month, whereas the wages out of San Francisco were 35 dollars or £7.

"Lose my crew—why, that suits me fine. You are the darndest crowd of hoboos and stiffes ever I sailed with. Away forrard and back to your cabin, and next time you want to make a complaint come to me reasonably and I'll listen, but bowery methods won't go with me, and . . . and . . . and next time you hit that damned cook hit him so hard that he *can't* complain."

At tea-time the bos'un took his grub and then waited for the sailors, when, with their fingers to their noses, they gravely walked across the deck and threw dishes and all over the side. The terrified cook slammed and bolted both galley doors and slept in the galley, but next morning at breakfast-time the same performance was solemnly gone through by the crew. During



the night a raid was made on the galley and all the officers' dishes were sent down to Davy Jones, and on the third day we were faced with a real famine of dishes. The Captain never spoke a word except to tell the steward to cook all the mess stuff aft, and meanwhile "Chips," the ship's carpenter, was hastily fashioning kids or dishes out of old kerosene tins during the day and helping to throw them over the side at night. The galley was full of uncooked food and the men beginning to feel the effects of a sea-biscuit diet, when the Captain sent for the bos'un. As a result, the cook was disrated and sent as a deck hand, into the bos'un's watch too, and it was arranged that the men should have free run of the galley and cook their own food—an arrangement that appeared to satisfy them, for there were no more complaints. Poor old Slushy had a bad time on deck, and he was over the side quicker than the anchor when we arrived at 'Frisco.

Five hundred miles out from San Francisco a bird about the size of a gull, but of a drab colour, circled round the ship a few times and then settled on one of the yard-arms. The mate said it was a Pilot bird and would not leave us until we got to 'Frisco. But if the ship's head was swung round and headed for Japan for two hours, that bird would decide that we were not going to his port, and he would fly off and look for a vessel that was.

That bird certainly stayed with us until we entered the Golden Gate, but there was of course



no chance of prevailing upon the Captain to test the mate's statement. Now and then it would swoop down after some scraps thrown over the side by the cook, but always it would go back to that yard-arm and sit soberly staring right ahead. It was very alert, and several attempts to catch it failed, as the bird just dropped off the yard as soon as the man's foot touched the foot-rope.

There is another bird common to these regions, called the Booby bird, and he gets this name from the silly way he permits himself to be caught. He settles about the spars and will run about like a hen in a hencoop in an endeavour to escape when approached, when all the fat-head has to do is to fall off the spar and open his wings.

Which reminds me of a German boy named Fritz, who after much taunting and persuasion had got aloft to the topsail yard for the first time. Like most novices he found coming down, or the *looking* down to see where to put his feet, much worse than the going up, and he got very badly scared indeed. He had been up about an hour, and at last the mate, losing patience, shouted :

"Come down out of that, you stiff."

"How vill I get down?" whimpered Fritz.

"Let go both hands and feet."

Slowly and painfully he clambered down, and directly he reached the lower ratlines and was preparing to jump down on deck, the mate went along, and giving a keen glance at his face, sent

him up again, and told him to go a bit higher this time.

It was drastic treatment, but Fritz was made of the right stuff and he beat down his fear, and ever after that he was as good as any man aloft.

The nonchalance of sailors aloft is amazing. Going up and coming down there are always stout, taut shrouds to cling to, but when out along the swinging yards there is only the heaving foot-rope. With feet well apart and knees jammed against the underside of the yard, both hands are kept free to handle the sail. It requires tremendous nerve to let go the jackstay for the first time and put both hands out and grab that mad, flapping sail. Supposing she flaps and gets your knees out from under the yard, what do you do? Or supposing in one of those heavy rolls you start to slide out along the foot-rope? Do, why you just hang on to that sail for all you are worth. You'll save your life and get the sail furled, and that is what you are up there to do.

The power behind the flap of a big sail is terrific. In a fair breeze only, we often used to hang on to the main stay and walk out on the bellying bunt of the mainsail. Directly a sail is hauled up, that is when the clewlines (on the corners or sheets) and the buntlines (around the middle) are hauled up tight from on deck, the yard is trimmed to spill the wind out of the sail before the men get up aloft to furl it. With a heavy gale astern it is impossible to get a yard round far enough properly to spill the wind, and then the flaps are

very dangerous. If you hang on too long, a flap may jerk you up and over the yard and down the front of the sail, whereas if you let go at all, the sail may flap back and fall over that yard and you, and then tear itself loose and you with it. At such times double the usual number of men are sent aloft, and inch after inch of the sail is won to the united pulls while somebody sings a chanty.

Six hours at any one job is a long time, but in one blow, when the buntlines parted and the immense sail of some six thousand square feet was almost free from clew to clew, all hands were on the fore yard for six hours, and failing to win a foot the order was given to cut away. A knife cut in the head each side and whoosh! the canvas is flying away to leeward, and the heavy wire bolt ropes sink sullenly down, as if angry at the sudden robbery of their power to smash human heads and fingers.

We towed through the Golden Gate at sunrise on August 19, after a passage of 147 days for the 16,500 miles, nearly a half of which had been covered in the last forty days. We dropped anchor for the night off Oakland and all the crew cleared off except Black Peter and another German called Blocher, who was only putting in time to shorten his service in the German navy.

We pulled alongside next day and I was appointed night watchman. This meant that I would be on duty from 6 p.m. until 6 a.m. to keep prowlers off the ship, to watch the lights, to light the donkey fire, and to make coffee for all hands and roust them out about 5.30 a.m.

This is supposed to be one of the soft jobs because the night watchman can get ashore every afternoon by himself, but I much preferred going at night with the rest of the bunch.

The four-masted barque *Olive Branch* towed in a few days later, absolutely crippled, with nothing on her decks higher than her deckhouses, with only twenty out of a crew of forty left, and after taking 150 days across from Kobe. Caught in a typhoon, she had rolled her four masts and half her crew overboard. Golly, how we loathed those two apprentices that were saved! They used to come it over us as if we had never seen a real blow at all, and they scorned our story that we had a worse blow—but then our skipper was a real sailorman.

## CHAPTER VI

### SAN FRANCISCO

**I**N those days San Francisco had a bad reputation. Even men whose "travels" consisted only of 'bus rides between Camberwell and the City used to talk darkly of the wickedness of 'Frisco, usually finishing up their remarks by expressing a wish to go there!

In fact, it is one of the wonder cities of the world. Situated on possibly the most beautiful harbour in the Pacific and surrounded by blue hills, with its modern chessboard streets in one quarter and its Chinatown close by, rapid transit, express elevators, quick-lunch bars, oyster pirates, armed cowboys in for a spree, hoboes, hooligans and "stiffs," and a dozen glorious bathing-places and sailing reaches near at hand, it contains everything to satisfy romantic youth and hard-headed middle age.

Like every large American city it has its "tenderloin," where, according to the theory, vice is interned and, as if in return for leaving the rest of the city clean and wholesome, allowed to do just whatever it will. The theorist says, "Well, we've got to put up with this accursed immorality but we will locate it, bunched up and under supervision, away outside the city proper, and then anybody that wants it must go out and get it. If a man is so bad that of his own free will he will take the trouble to go to the tenderloin, well, we cannot help that, he's hopeless anyway, but *we* won't let vice stalk along our principal



streets and entice its prey as they do in London."

A very pretty theory that absolutely fails in practice nevertheless. The first man aboard the *Spindrift* was a tout. Apprentices are looked upon as good game, the very fact that they have been sent to sea is an indication of sinful inclinations, and their parents usually send them some money at each port.

"Well, boys, had a nice passage? Nice boat too. They say ashore that your old man is a devil. Did you have many gales? Glad to be in port, eh? and I tell you 'Frisco is *some* place to be ashore in and all. Half the apprentices that come here don't go away again, only too durned satisfied to stay, believe me. God's own city in God's own country is 'Frisco, sonny. Plenty of friends waiting to welcome you and tons of money to be made."

The four of us were listening in a patronisingly bored sort of a way, trying to kid him we had been to sea for years. But *he* knew, for he went on:

"Even if you do go to sea again, well, you'll get forty-five dollars a month and . . ."

At this moment the skipper came out of the doorway on the other side of the deck and, summing up our loquacious friend at a glance, took him by the collar and ran him towards the gangway, and up on to the wharf, and as the tout legged it for all he was worth the skipper shouted:

"Next time you come I'll have these boys educated up to save *me* time by hammering hell out of you yourselves."

When he got back on deck he said:

"Now look here, boys, it's not my job to morally educate you, but I've seen too many youngsters ruined by such scum as that. Every time you meet a smooth-tongued guy like that, try to reckon out what he is after. He does not like you so much on sight that he feels bound to spread himself like so much jam. That man and his kind would whip you up to the tenderloin, show you the 'can-can,' rob you, drug you and ship you away on a whaler inside twenty-four hours, and he gets fat on it too."

In the evening we had an entirely different sort of visitor, for a curate from the Seamen's Mission came down to invite us to a pleasant afternoon service on the next day. We went along and after a few hymns were treated to the most fire-and-brimstone sermon we ever heard. But it was almost worth it to see our late boatswain, already cleared out and on the rocks, bellowing :

"O God, dour relp pin nages past."

The young curate preached the sermon. He said :

"Brethren, we live in an age of wonderful scientific discoveries, and it is well that we should endeavour to turn these same discoveries into useful lessons and reminders for ourselves. It is now said that when a star is discovered, it has not really just come there, but that the light from it has only just reached the earth. Now light travels at the extraordinary speed of ten million *knots* per minute, and the world is, as we know, many millions of years old. That puts that

star some considerable distance away from us. You have all seen a common spider: well, light travels several million times as fast as a spider, even a *fast* spider. But let us suppose a spider built a web, at his ordinary speed, between that star and the earth, and then, again at his ordinary speed, carried one tiny, solitary grain of sand up and up along his web and deposited that grain of sand on the star, and then, at his ordinary speed, don't forget, climbed back to earth, and again at his ordinary speed he picks up *another* grain of sand and away up to the star and back, at his ordinary speed, mark you. And the spider keeps this up until he has carried *all* the sand up. That would take him a long time, wouldn't it? But, brethren, it is but an infinitesimal fraction of the time you will spend in the torments of hell, whipped, scorched and seered with tongues of flame, broken and bruised on the thorny wheel of sinful pride, chased always by the legions of the Devil in the uttermost darkness that is apart from God if you do not . . ."

We did not wait to see what we had to do. Later the bos'un joined us in the nearby saloon and ordered what he called "a binder" of brandy. He said :

"What with hard-case mates here and Hiram K. Satan down below, it seems to me that a poor sailorman is in for a very thin time; still, that spider must have had a *hell of a pay-day* when he got through shifting the ballast."

We used to attend Church of England, but my father's theory was that a bad action brought

an immediate punishment here on this earth. He said God had made natural laws which never failed to operate, and it was just a bit of conceit to think that He watched every action of such miserable worms as men, and worried Himself designing new punishments all His time. That seemed right enough to me ; or what was all the sorrow in the world for now, if we were only just laying up a packet such as that described by the curate ? Or was it *all* just punishment and misery. Here and hereafter ! Anyway, I felt that if that curate was right, God must be a detestable old Tyrant, and moreover a bit of a silly ass, for He was always expecting ships to do twelve knots in a calm. And did that curate honestly think that there was such a big difference between him and the wickedest man in the world, except in the luck of environment and temptation, to justify him expecting eternal happiness while some other poor chap was playing eternal hide-and-seek with "Hiram K." ? And supposing that other poor chap was his brother ! It's a dangerous game for a man to try and define God, and the effect of most such endeavours is to drive people into that warmer and more generous " uttermost darkness."

Chinatown was a disappointment, inasmuch as no infuriated, opium-smoking celestial tried to disembowel us. The easiest entrance is from a turning in California Street, and a few paces brings a truly wonderful change in the scenery. Back there is all glitter, well-dressed crowds throng the brilliantly lit sidewalks, looking into



the magnificent shops, fine electric and cable trams clang by, and everywhere are the manifestations of a thriving populous Western city.

Here the shops, though well lighted, are narrow and often without windows at all, and the balconies above are hung with coloured electric lamps and paper lanterns. Small active figures with immobile faces topped with round shiny hats flit silently about. It is just China ; it might be Canton except for a weird impression, conveyed one does not quite know how, that here the Chink has his tongue in his cheek, for *he* is doing the exploiting. He controls the laundry business, he has a great and increasing hold on the barber and restaurant business, and he knows well that he makes the finest domestic servant in the world, and so must soon make himself indispensable.

Chinatown is not because the Chinaman is so low down and ignorant that he cannot appreciate the much-vaunted customs, comforts and conveniences of Western civilisation. He has tried all that and found it wanting, so he just cut off a small piece of his own land, all ready fitted up with all that he wants, and then put it down nice and handy to where he works. He turned down, deliberately and for ever, most that we boast about and tried to shove on to him.

We went into a Joss-house, a dark cellar extravagantly decorated with hideous dragons and fire-spouting lizards, and in the centre a wonderfully carved god of ebony and ivory, with gilt ears and nostrils. A number of Chinese



beggars were congregated around plates of food and mumbling prayers at a terrific speed. This food, or the money to buy it, is provided by the wealthier members of the community, and at the same time they tell the priest the substance of the prayers they want made. The beggars are told what to pray about before they approach the food, and they simply do a job for the wealthy shopkeeper or jeweller who cannot find the time to waste in prayer, probably because he is too busy doing down a white man. Huge books contain approved prayers for specific purposes, and sometimes it will take a man a day to get through the prescribed prayer, and he is not allowed to touch the food until he has finished the prayer.

And, of course, we went to an opium den. So you've seen an opium den: what a privilege, what a miracle!

Take the dirtiest, darkest cellar, with a lot of huge pillars, supporting a viaduct or something very heavy, running through it and so making a number of pitch-black sinister nooks, throw a few corpses about the place, make the corpses squirm and gibber every now and then, put a fire in a little lattice bucket and so fill the place with a smoky stench, dress a hideous old devil up in a pigtail and a greasy blue jumper and let him offer you a filthy pipe and some mouldy beeswax, and there you are. That is a *proper* opium den. And yet these disgusting hell-holes have become garbed in Romance. How is it done?

Life has been full of such disappointments.

When quite a youth I used to enthuse about and look forward to seeing and enjoying places and things I read about. Pâté de foie gras ! In due course I got it, could have had tons of it. No, thank you, pass me the haricot beans, please. An opium den ! Show me the gasworks, please. What frauds ! But there were compensations, for if man made a mess of the truth when describing that sort of junk, he made a bigger mess when he tried to describe such as a sunset seen through the Golden Gate, or a sunrise slowly tinting the icy sides of mighty Kinchenjunga.

## CHAPTER VII

### ACROSS THE PACIFIC

ON September 1 we towed out between the Heads and set sail for Tacoma and Seattle, in Puget Sound, to finish unloading, and then across to Port Blakeley to load lumber for the Broken Hill silver-mines in Australia.

Mount Rainier, 14,444 feet, to the south-east of Tacoma, has two official names. There is great civic rivalry between these two towns of Tacoma and Seattle, both of which owe their being to the discovery of Klondyke. The mountain is nearer to and the view is superb from Tacoma, and there it is called Mt. Tacoma, and a man would pretend he did not know where Mt. Rainier was; but in Seattle you'd get brained for asking for Mt. Tacoma. Seattle is fast outstripping its neighbour, for its population has increased from a few hundreds to over three hundred thousand in about two decades.

Port Blakeley is a typical American lumber camp always right against huge pine forests, for as soon as all the timber within convenient distance is felled the camp is shifted bodily into the forest again. Sawmills, bungalows and wharves are all shifted, sometimes four or five miles, and we arrived just after such a shift and moored with our lines fast to growing trees. With nearly a thousand tons of stone ballast we required a deck load of some six feet depth right along the main deck to bring the Plimsol mark to the water.

Holes were left about the doors, capstans and rigging, and new rails were lashed along the shrouds, and with the exception of the huge binding chains the new deck was fairly clear, but a perfect death-trap if any water came aboard.

When loaded we towed down to Port Townsend and shipped our new crew. And a weird, disreputable, drunken lot they were too, every one of them an absconder from some ship out from Europe anxious to secure the better wages. They came aboard about nightfall, and with them came an armed watchman to see that none of them were got away again by the boarding-house master. This latter gentleman is now just a relic of the barbarous past.

The boarding-house master was usually called a "Runner." He kept a dirty mean hovel, which he dignified with the title of boarding-house, and in this place he housed and fed sailors on a sort of broad co-operative basis. When a ship signs on, every one of the crew gets a month's pay in advance, and *all* this used to go to the runner irrespective of the time the sailor had spent in the house. The runner's object was obviously to ship men as fast as he could, a sort of quick returns and big profits business, and he used to entice all the men he could from an incoming vessel so that he could ship them next day on an outward-bounder.

"Shanghai" Brown is the most famous runner in history. He operated in 'Frisco between 1870 and 1890, and if he had not enough men in his house he just waylaid and sandbagged or

shanghaied, by doping a drink, any man he could lay hands on. His career came to an abrupt termination when he shanghaied a clergyman and a lawyer, who were out for a quiet stroll, and shipped them before the mast on a whaler. Unfortunately for Brown the vessel ran ashore in the tide-rip near the Golden Gate and his victims were able to get in touch with the authorities almost immediately. Otherwise it might have been a year before the ship returned and proof would have been difficult. Not only did he entice men away from arriving ships, and that was fairly easy because of the higher wages, but he would snaffle a crew that only an hour before he had put on a departing ship, and it was the captains, and not the runners, who provided the night watchman. The runner is usually a pimp for houses of ill-fame and grog shops, so the poor old sailorman stands little chance of saving his money. But then he doesn't want to, and this arrangement put up by the runner suited everybody, until the missions arrived and started to "save" the sailor and the runner. One of our men was shanghaied. He was an engine-driver, a very tall, thin man, who at once got the nickname of "Slim."

Just outside Cape Flattery, on November 3, 1903, we ran into a strong puff from the southward, and the towboat blew a number of short, imperative hoots and we dropped her towline only about five miles from land and stood away to the north-west, instead of south-west, which was our proper course. Slim fell from aloft, but did



himself no damage beyond burning his fingers to the bones. He was passing a gasket round the mainsail and pulled heavily on the bight, instead of the end, and went backwards off the foot-rope, but he had the sense to hang on like grim death to that bit of rope and so saved his life by breaking his fall.

Several logs broke adrift and stove in two skylights and a lifeboat and swiped the galley chimney over the side, but the worst was a log that burst in the door to our cabin and then got itself wedged across the opening so that we could not fix up a jury door. We boys lived in the sail-locker where the sails were very comfortable, but the rats were a little too strong and hungry to be pleasant. All our beds and chests were washed out and we used to take it in turns to sit patiently near the broken door and salvage old waistcoats, boots and other gear every time she shipped a sea.

We soon ran into warmer weather and later hove-to for an hour off Flint Island, which we were told was owned or worked by Lever Brothers for the copra for making Sunlight Soap. The boss, the only white man on the atoll, came off in a boat with six Kanaka boys, and we did a great trade swapping old magazines and books for bunches of bananas, and eggs. Just after we left, Slim, who was now quite well again, put up a performance all to himself.

The runner had shipped Slim as an A.B., although he had never put foot on a ship before, to get the extra money, for an A.B. who takes his

trick at the wheel and on the look-out gets twice as much as an O.S., who omits these duties. On the roof of his cabin the skipper always has a tell-tale compass, so that he does not need to come on deck to see what course she is making. Slim told us all about it afterwards. He said :

“ Somebody hollers ‘ Slim, it’s your trick at the wheel.’ I ses ‘ My trick, is it ? And what the hell is that ? ’ ‘ Steer the ship for two hours, of course. Ain’t you ever done it before ? ’ So I ses ‘ Nope ; but, by jings, if *you* can do it, I’ll bet I can.’ Now I had been watching the other men and I see ’em turn the wheel this way a little and then that way a little and then look around as if to say ‘ Well, that’s all right,’ and it looked easy as pie to me. So I went up and Ginger give me the wheel and ses ‘ Sow-sow-west.’ I ses ‘ Well, what about it, where is it, anyway ? ’ Ginger looked up a bit surprised and ses ‘ Keep it on that,’ pointing to a black mark on the compass face. I ses ‘ Keep *what* on it ? ’ and Ginger ses ‘ Why, the ship’s ’ead ; she runs a half-turn to leeward.’ As Ginger went past the mate he shouts ‘ Sow-sow-west, sir,’ and the mate answers ‘ Very well.’ So I thinks : well, that’s all right up to now anyway. All the points looked the same to me, so I just done the same as the others done, and I gave her a few spokes this way and a few spokes that way and then looked around, *including* right astern, when all of a sudden the old man leaps up the companion-way and hollers ‘ Where the hell are you going, back to

Seattle?' 'Now, Captain,' I ses, 'I was getting on very nicely until you come interfering. . . .'  
'*Interfering*, you . . . hobo. Here, Mr. Lewis, get this idiot away from the wheel.' So Stumpy come up and looked very surprised like when I ses 'Sow-sow-east,' and turned to the skipper and says 'What's the course, sir?' Then the old man asked what I was and I told him, and he ses if I fix up the donkey and all the winches and get off the ship directly we arrives at Wallaroo, he won't give me in charge for endangering several thousand pounds' worth of property, besides many valuable lives. And when I was coming away he was talking to that mate like a father."

Steering a big ship in a fair breeze is a delightful job, and I always looked forward to the two hours' trick at the wheel. Soon after Slim's performance I was at the wheel when we were romping along before the faithful trade winds, and the beauty of it all got hold of me and I composed a poem—my first effort. I was a wee bit afraid to use that word poem until I had looked up its meaning in the dictionary—application of imaginative language to the treatment of a subject—well, it is that all right.

The brave trade winds have sung their song  
since ever the world did cool,  
Before the whale or his prototype crawled from  
the jungle pool;  
And still this music comes to us, played in the  
throbbing shrouds,

While overhead a genial sun peeps through the  
racing clouds,  
Kissing the crests of the laughing waves in a  
riot of dazzling foam ;  
And even the sails hum a tune, for they know  
we're going home.  
The dolphins play with the flying fish and leap  
the curling crest,  
Or nestle against the bows of the ship like a babe  
at its mother's breast ;  
And a Pilot bird circles round to settle on a  
thrumming stay,  
Looking ahead with a sober stare, as if it knew  
the way ;  
And rainbows dance around the stem as she  
slips through the willing sea,  
While the swirling wake runs in behind as if in  
sympathy.

I scribbled this down as soon as I got below, and Feltham, who had been attracted by my frantic haste to get it down before I forgot it, asked what it was. I did not care to show him, for whatever he thought of it, it was a masterpiece to me, and I feared that his ignorant comments might instantly and utterly crush this divine gift that had so suddenly come to me. Perhaps only a little of that, and quite a lot of fear at the unmerciful chaffing that would be mine if these great hefty lads found out that I had *sunk* to poetry. But at last I handed him the paper, and he read it through and said :

“ It's like Sam Weller's love letter, it pulls

up rayther sudden. And what's all this tosh about going home? "

" That is poetic licence."

He said he would add a couple of lines to make it true to life and round it off so that anybody would know the darned thing *was* finished, and he wrote on the back :

And about the decks the old shell-backs cursed  
and swore and spat,  
And mates halloed and bos'uns " blowed " and  
there you are—that's that.

When he went up to the wheel he told the mate about it, and the mate sent for me and said he wanted to see it. I gave him the now badly crumpled piece of paper and, spreading it out with a stubby finger on the after skylight, he read it through. I watched the wrinkles increase in his forehead as he slowly waded through it, and then he staggered me by handing it back to me and saying :

" That's all right, but where's this *pome* you've written? "

" It's . . . it's . . . it's on the back, sir."

He turned the sheet and read through Feltham's words and said :

" *That's what?* I believe you've gone crazy."

Well, it was no good arguing with an unpoetical clam like him, so I seized the paper and rushed off the poop.

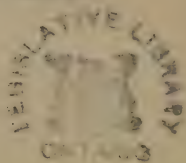
We crossed 180° on Christmas Day, and the new cook put up a rattling good dinner and the



skipper sent us in a bottle of rum to wash it down with. Going westward a day is dropped, and it is said that mean old Scotch skippers used to fake their run figures so that they could always drop a Sunday, and always pick up an extra working day when crossing in the other direction, and sailors declare that to this meanness alone are due all head winds and calms, and that any captain that picked up a Sunday would always make record passages.

One other member of the crew had to thank the runner for his first experience of a sailing ship. He was a Swede, tall and powerful but very loosely put together; his great arms swung from his shoulders like those of some monstrous baboon. He could not understand English, and in the words of the mate: he did not know which end of the ship went first; and this ignorance, added to his moon-like empty vacant face, used to infuriate the mate, not so much against poor "Jumbo," as he was called, but against the system that permitted such dangerous lunatics to be dumped aboard to do the really skilled work of manning a ship.

But as the system could not be kicked, Jumbo had to take the buffetings. Poor soul, he was in a constant state of amazement at the sudden adventure that had been thrust upon him. He could not understand what magic had suddenly spirited him from the wood-yard on to a strange ship, no one could explain to him, and he had neither the knowledge to understand the orders



shouted at him nor the intelligence to act had he understood.

After many failures he at last conquered his fear of the rigging, and the mate used to send him aloft on every possible occasion, mainly as a means of getting him off the deck and thus avoiding the worry of finding a job on deck that he could even begin to manage. One day Jumbo was up on the royal yard "picking up gaskets" and rolling them into neat little coils on the top of the yard, and the mate bellowed:

"Hey, you . . ."

"Yaye yaye."

"When you come down, pick up that gasket on the topsail yard."

"Yaye yaye."

"Aye aye WHAT?"

"Vot iss dot?"

The mate was only calling for the "sir," but Jumbo only knew that something had to be done but he was not quite sure what it was. Slowly and very cautiously he climbed down to the deck and shuffled along to the mate, no doubt feeling that in coming all that distance to find out exactly what was wanted of him, he had performed a fine piece of seamanship, and he said again:

"Vot iss dot?"

He was forthwith felled to the deck by the enraged mate, who helped him up with his boot, and shouted:

"Sir, sir, aye aye, SIR, damn it, say sir when I speak to you."

More slowly but very little wiser Jumbo clambered up to the yard and carried out the order ; and when he came down the mate was obviously a bit ashamed of himself, and to make amends he took Jumbo on to the poop and told him the names of the ropes :

" Here, this is mizzen topgallant halyards, next royal clewline, this royal halyards. This is main lower topgallant brace, next upper topgallant brace and then royal brace. See ? "

" Vot iss does ? "

" Never mind ' vot iss does,' you learn the names. What is this ? "

And Jumbo guessed right. Then the mate told him to stand by the wheel and then gave the order " Lee main royal brace," only wanting Jumbo to run smartly up and put his hand on the right pin. Jumbo leapt off like a sprinter and dashed up to the mizzen topgallant halyards, and before the mate could stop him, threw the rope from the belaying pin, and stood looking with fear and despair on every feature as the snaky coil hissed through the leading block and the yard came down on its lifts with a crash. He spluttered :

" I vas tink . . . "

" You stink up here and I'll break your neck. Get to hell out of this, go on."

" Vere iss dot ? "

Jumbo fled from the fury of the mate and did not stop until he reached the fo'c'sle

When one remembers how sparsely ships are manned, so much so that in anything like a

real blow it required all hands to handle the ship, it was nothing short of a crime that men like Slim and Jumbo should be shipped as able-bodied seamen. Those two on a topsail yard, instead of the two capable men that really should have been there, might mean the loss of a fine ship, with all hands and a valuable cargo.

But those hard old captains did not worry about possibilities. The runner was useful inasmuch as he could be relied upon to secure the numbers to make a crew, and the mates would soon complete the education of the novices. A few were inherent failures and no mate could make them into useful sailors, but these were chased off the ship at the next port and not paid a penny for the little work they had done, although it is alleged their names appeared on the articles, as also their signatures or marks, in acknowledgment of their wages. At the time of the Californian gold rush and later in New Zealand, ships were often held up for months waiting for a crew, or even two or three men to complete a crew, and it was, in fact, such delays that created the runner and the tolerance of so vicious a system by the captains and owners.

And most runners were fair in their dealings, and with the stiffs a few really good men would be sent aboard. Against Slim and Jumbo we got "Stumpy" Doyle, a short cheery little man who had been forty years in sailing ships and knew all there was to know about them. He could put a long splice in a wire that neither the eye of man nor the sheave it ran over could detect.



The only words of praise the second mate was ever heard to utter concerned Stumpy when he said it was a treat to watch him steer.

Stumpy, like another called "Spud" Williams, was typical of the large number of real sailormen that constituted the backbone of the sailing mercantile marine: efficient, intelligent, quick and cheerful under all orders and in all weathers, foolishly generous, improvident and always on the grouse, not as a habit but as a duty solemnly performed. But his grouse was only talk, and he would break off in the middle of a yarn in which he was calling the mate the most fearful names to obey that same mate with a cheery and genuine "Aye aye, sir."

He had had one shore job, when he was a splicer on a cable tramway, but he got tired of this and just walked down to the docks and returned to his first love. It was the same old circle: a long voyage, a big pay-day, a colossal purple patch, a runner's house and then off again on another long voyage to do it all over again.

The mate soon realised that Stumpy was a "real sailorman," the highest term of praise he had, and he used to send the apprentices to assist Stumpy in splicing, serving and lashing and such-like jobs. And as you passed the spun-yarn ball round to follow his mallet, or held the strands of a wire apart with a marline spike as he made the tuck, the weather-beaten old salt would tell great yarns of his experiences. He was an absolute marksman with the surplus liquid from



his everlasting chew of tobacco, and for his work he always selected a site within range of a port or a scupper hole, and as he talked a stream of brown fluid would be unerringly shot into the sea.

He had fallen or been washed overboard on two or three occasions, and he told of one experience like this :

" Easy with that ball, I gotter go slow when we're going left because of me arm. There's a big dent in the half-round of the old *Dunraven* . . . take that hitch out. We was painting the backstays and I was doing the mizzen royal . . . what's that old stiff nosing round the fo'c'sle for? . . . and picking up the to'gallants as I worked down . . . Here, bos'un, the heart of this is all perished. Don't matter to *him*, but what about the men that may be aloft when it parts. I was running me own bos'un's chair and I was just going to lower away when the rigging shot up in front of me and down I come and hit the half-round wallop and bounced off into the sea.

" That mate drives me crazy ; why don't he go on the poop and *stay* there? Look at him messing around old Slushy, as if anything could make him cook a decent dinner. The pin in the block had carried away and the sheaf come flying down on deck and very nearly killed the man at the wheel . . . just a little taller here . . . for? . . . make the durned stuff climb this lump by the eye, what did you think it was for? . . . We was doing about eight knots and

I was over the side but still in me chair, and all of a sudden the rope run taut and I was being towed along astern. I could not swim and cannot now—what's the use of swimming a thousand mile from land?—but I hung on to that chair like grim death.

“It seemed as if I was pushing the whole world with me chest, and I was being jerked along the waves like a big flying fish, and then when I was well up in the air once I see the main and mizzen yards swinging round and I knew they was heaving to.

“Then I thinks to meself, well, they're wasting their time, becos as soon as she stops I'm going to sink, and be the time a boat gets here I'll be hanging like a plumb-line three hundred feet under her keel . . . give that a good tap, will yer.

“It was the speed that was keeping me up, d'yer see, and I was working out all sorts of schemes as to how they would send me grub down that line and p'raps tow me clean across to Phillyerdelphia . . . easy now, you're a turn ahead of me.

“But I was still in me chair when the pressure on me chest eased off and I started to shout out, for I did not know whether them aboard knew I was on the line or thought I was about two mile astern . . . we'll want another ball.

“Then that blamed rope started to sink and run me in towards the stern, and as I sunk down, I thought for good, I let out a terrific howl. Next thing I was in me bunk in the fo'c'sle, and then I heard that they knew I was on the line,

and as soon as she eased off they run me aboard, chair and all, but I don't want any more towing . . . look at that mate, will yer; anybody'd think that fo'c'sle door was studded with flaming diamonds the way he's looking at it."

A boatswain's chair is a short piece of wood about two feet by six inches, slung on short ropes or lanyards, and is used for painting stays and other standing rigging aloft. A rope is attached to the chair and run through a block above and led down to the deck, or, in the case of rapid movement as in painting a single rope, back to the man on the chair so that he can lower himself as the work proceeds. The lanyard is shackled round the stay to prevent the man swinging about with the roll of the ship.

In Stumpy's adventure the shackle must have broken when it met the swelling at the bottom where the stay passes round the rigging screw and the three hundred feet of rope was free to run out over the rail.

One day a big shark was observed lazing slowly along astern, and anything thrown overboard would attract him, and a break in the surface and a glint of his white stomach, like a porpoise jumping low, would reveal him on his back snapping at the prize.

A few fathoms of rope with a huge hook and about four pounds of white fat pork was soon trailing astern, and almost immediately a terrific jerk showed that he was on. The mate took a turn of the line round the rail, while a man shinned up and rove the end through the block on a boat

davit, and then all hands clapped on and Mr. Shark was run up and swung inboard and lowered like a boat. He thrashed about with his tail, and so powerful were the blows that several times he leapt clear above the rail, and all the time his jaws were working and we could see the several rows of teeth rising and falling as he opened and closed his great mouth.

"Take the weight," shouted the mate, and the brute was hoisted up until his tail was clear of the deck, and then a man went up the davit again and passed a loop round the line. When this slid down to the tail it was pulled tight, and shortly afterwards the shark was quiet on deck, lashed fore and aft. Chips then settled it with an adze. The biggest one I have ever seen, this brute was just seventeen feet long.

Sailors never spare a shark, and sometimes they are very cruel. No crueller than the shark is when he gets a chance, but often they will just cut off the tail and fins and then sling it overboard helpless and at the mercy of its great enemy the swordfish.

A shark is comparatively a very slow swimmer, and always moves in a slow, deliberate way in the water. Even the turn on to his back is slow and dignified, and he is a scavenger mainly because there is no live fish he can catch.

We passed Ball's Pyramid, a small rocky islet shaped just like a huge warning finger pointing skyward, Flinders Island, and just got a glimpse of Tasmania as we passed through the Bass Straits towards the Spencer Gulf, where we



struck a "Southerly Buster" and romped up to Wallaroo at fourteen knots. We overhauled a number wallowing along at eight knots, and it was then that I learnt to love a sailing ship, so clean, so beautiful and so *lively* compared with those old steam tubs, and requiring so much more skill to handle, and I then recorded a vow to stick to sail throughout.

On January 20, 1904, we anchored off Wallaroo, a tiny wooden town with a huge jetty two miles long, because the Gulf is so shallow that it requires this length to reach a depth of thirty feet. The arrival of a ship is a great event and the whole population troops aboard first chance they get, and the crew are regular heroes. Going to sea at all is, in their mind, some performance, "but fancy now, coming to Wallaroo and all."

Fruit was very cheap, and we used to attend the auctions where a forty-pound case of grapes and other fruits could often be got for half-a-crown. Bruno got appendicitis after eating some twenty pounds of grapes and was taken off to the hospital in a very bad way, and had a magnificent Press notice about it too. A few days later, in sheer ignorance, the rest of us went up to see him, taking, as usual for an invalid, about twenty pounds of grapes. The nurse threatened to heave the whole lot out of the window, but we pacified her and nearly drove Bruno mad by eating the whole lot while sitting on the edge of his bed.

The sea was so warm that we used to spend the whole of Sunday frolicking about the sands, and



altogether we had a fine, wild, rampant time at Wallaroo, and we were sorry when unloading was done and we set sail, in ballast, for Newcastle, N.S.W., there to load coal for Valparaiso.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE ROARING FORTIES

**N**EWCASTLE is a typical coal-mining town of some seventy thousand inhabitants, although its situation close beside the sea makes it a deal more salubrious than most mining towns. The Hunter River sweeps in between the Nobbies and then takes an almost right-angle turn to the northward, and on the east bank is a suburb called Stockton, built almost entirely on ground that was once ballast for ships, and just above is an area called Siberia, where ships still continue to add to the Australian Continent by dumping their ballast.

The usual method of dumping is to cock the lower yard-arm, the basket is then hoisted and swung out over the ship's side and at the extreme limit of the swing a trip-line fixed to the bottom of the basket is belayed, the basket jerked upside down and the ballast shot well away from the ship.

Siberia was our first experience of unloading and, the carpenter being busy with repairs, I was put on to drive the winch while Feltham was on the trip-line and Bruno supervised matters at the top of the hatch. Plasmon was night watchman.

Bruno blew his whistle, I turned on the steam and up shot the first basket of ballast and went swooping out over the side. It was no easy matter to begin with to know just when to check the trip, and Feltham was standing by the rail

letting the line run through his fingers, with his mouth wide open and his eyes bulging out, knowing nothing, but hoping that he would hit the right moment. Out rushed the basket to the limit of its swing and then paused. The mate yelled "Check that trip-line there," but the basket had already begun hurtling inboard. Feltham hauled in as fast as he could and fetched up the load just over the hatch, and about three-quarters of a ton of jagged stones went crashing down into the hold much to the astonishment of the men, none of whom, fortunately, were hurt.

Despite his annoyance, the mate burst out laughing at the ludicrous picture Feltham made, gaping up aloft and then down the hold. The mate handled the next few hoists and very soon Feltham was quite expert, and even tried to put on some edge about the importance of his job. A week later we towed over to Carrington and loaded some three thousand tons of Wallsend, about a third of this being for Concepcion and the rest for Valparaiso.

The second mate got himself into trouble just before we were ready for sea. We were clearing up the decks preparatory to washing down, and as usual the second busied himself putting rope ends up on to the rail to keep them out of the grit and dust that would soon be swept along the deck.

Near the main hatch he found one trailing right across the deck, and without looking he gave it a violent jerk and was forthwith struck immovable by a piercing yell. A stevedore had

been standing on the end of the rope and the jerk had thrown him off his feet and over the hatch combing down on to some jagged lumps of coal some fifteen feet below. The unfortunate man was seriously injured, and it was only with considerable difficulty that he was hoisted up and sent off to the hospital.

Later on, two policemen came aboard and took voluminous notes, although nobody had actually seen the accident. The second was not popular with the men, and the little bit of evidence was certainly not in his favour ; and as the policeman spoke in the grave and subdued manner usually associated with death, the second probably felt none too comfortable, although he showed no signs of it, and finally closed the interview by informing the guardians of the law that his decks were going to be washed down if all the stevedores in Australia were dead.

A few nights later the second mate came aboard very dishevelled and wet through, and despite his refusal of any information we heard later that some of the injured stevedore's mates had "waited" for him and "learned" him what it meant in a Labour Country to be even remotely connected with an affront to a working man, who in fact was just an ignorant fool to stand on *any* rope.

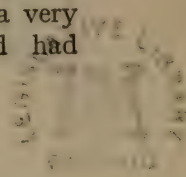
Through the Seamen's Mission we got to know a number of the nurses from the hospital, and with one of these, a pretty young girl named Muriel Deering, I had my first love affair. I do not think she noticed or even suspected the

dog-like admiration and devotion that was consuming me, but I had a real gaudy time building aircastles, and used to pass my time in a pleasant agony of day-dreams in a world with her, and tons of money! I told Bruno of my heart disease, but had to decline his only suggestion to "wallop me over the head" so that I would have to be sent to the hospital.

Loading went all too quickly and we sailed before I could pluck up courage to declare my passion, and the only memento I had was a small moustache that I had permitted to grow from the moment I set eyes on her as a further sign of my manliness. And I did not keep this for long either. Plasmon's jealous suggestion that I was growing a brush to paint the names on the lifeboats started the scrap; and the forcible removal of "this objectionable growth" by Bruno, while I was held down by the others, finished it.

The day before this happened, when I was at the wheel, the mate came and stared at the growth with unwinking eyes for about a minute, and then said: "It is a rugger match, there are fifteen aside."

On April 9, 1904, we towed out and set sail for Concepcion, a tiny port some two hundred miles south of Valparaiso. We carried two passengers, who were going to England via Valparaiso and a Pacific Steam Navigation liner, and one of them added quite a lot to the jollity of daily life. Mr. Slater was said to be a very wealthy man who in touring the world had





passed through Sydney and picked up his nephew, Jack Austin, and was taking him home to be "finished" at one of the universities. Mr. Slater spent most of his time writing in the saloon or walking the deck and talking with the captain, but Jack, who was only sixteen, soon got tired of lounging about and used to clap on to a brace or do a bit of painting with the rest of us.

He told us he always yearned to go to sea in a sailing ship, but that his eyes were bad and his father had apprenticed him to a chemist, and he had just got the sack when his uncle "blew along."

"What did you get the sack for, Jack?"

"Because I did what the boss told me to."

"Oh, go on, people don't get sacked for that. What was it for?"

"I don't like to tell you, it seems so foolish, and besides it isn't either interesting, funny or polite."

"Oh, never mind that, neither are we; come on, tell us."

"All right then. Well, after I had been behind the shop in the mixing and dispensing department for a few weeks, the boss sent for me and said: 'I'm going to transfer you to the selling side of the business. You can't do any good in the dispensing without proper training, and you do not want to grow up as just a bottle-washer. Now the selling side is most important and on efficient salesmanship our profits depend, and you put your back into it and learn how to do it and you'll never want for a good job. I

will help you to begin with ; all you have to do is be polite and prompt.' So I went out into the shop and enjoyed the change. When there were no customers in I could look out of the windows, and the shop *smelt* much better than the other room too. A few days later a lady came in and asked for some stuff and I said we were out of stock, and so she went out again. The boss came up to me and said : ' What's the matter now ? ' and I told him that we were out of stock of the stuff she asked for. The boss said : ' That does not matter, we have always got something equally good, if not superior, at the same price. It is your business to see that *nobody* leaves this shop without buying something, and don't let me see that happen again.' A few days later a lady came in and asked for something, and I said : ' Sorry, madam, we are out of stock, but we have *sand-paper, emery-paper and fly-paper* all equally good, if not superior, and at the same price . . .' and she turned and rushed out of the shop. The boss came and asked what had happened, and I told him I had faithfully carried out his orders, but it did not seem to work. He said, ' What did she ask for ? ' and when I told him, he chased me out of the shop and told me never to come back again."

" What *did* she ask for ? " enquired Plasmon.

We passed in sight of the coast of South Island, New Zealand, and soon reached 45° South, and then squaring the yards romped along at a good twelve knots before the everlasting westerly

gales. Just as we were hoping to beat the record of twenty-seven days, held by the German ship *Steinbek*, for the 7,200-mile passage, a heavy roller breaking under the counter kicked the wheel from the helmsman's hands and jammed the rudder down hard-a-port. The sudden check before she answered the helm brought the next sea over the poop, which broke away the wheel-box and carried away the wheel, and collecting debris as it thundered forward battered in boats and doors and finished up by washing the whole lot, including the bos'un, over the fo'c'sle head.

The ship soon fell off the wind and rolled with square yards into the trough of a mountainous sea, where she clattered and banged about, half buried under huge seas that careered about her and thundered on to her as if rejoicing in this victory of Nature over Man. All hands were called and one watch fitted ropes to the tiller and the two poop capstans so that she could be steered "pulley-haul," while the other hauled up the gear of the sails on the main and mizzen masts. As soon as the steering gear was ready, six men were left to work the capstans, and the rest of us braced the foreyards and set the inner jib to drive her round before the wind again. We had a bad time down on the main deck, for all the time huge seas were dancing aboard, over the weather rail and whoosh across the deck and flumpff against the lee rail, and it was a question whether she would pay off or roll her sticks out. She did a bit of both. The mizzen topmast went just above the "top"; the whole

outfit of sails, yards and mast went over the side with a terrifying crash; the six men at the capstans were pinned under the shrouds, and while they were being disentangled the ship veered round again into the trough.

But it was that good old mizzen topmast that saved all hands, for the twisted mass of wreckage held to her stern by the wire shrouds acted like a sea anchor, and we soon had her running before the wind again. Then all hands, except those steering, got frantically busy trying to cut through those same shrouds and get the ship clear of the twisted mass of wood and iron that threatened to come aboard again over the poop. A cheer went up as "Chips" severed the last strand and the dear old tub, free of this burden, shot forward into her full stride. Directly after this the mate served out rum and took a roll-call, and it was only then discovered that the bos'un was lost. One other man failed to answer his name, but he was found jammed under the windlass, with a broken leg, and he said he had seen the bos'un go over the fo'c'sle head but had got caught in another green 'un as he ran aft to give the alarm. The skipper, who had been supervising the steering, then came up and said: "Give them another tot of rum, Mr. Lewis, they're a darned good crowd, and if it wasn't for their good work we'd all be with the bos'un now." And then he shook hands with every man. The effect of this was simply marvellous, and for months the sailors could talk of little else. Black Peter, who had been to sea in



sail for thirty years, said he did not think there *ever* had been such a fine skipper, and he was going to sail with him for the rest of his life, if he'd let him. The skipper said a few words from the Bible which was meant to be the bos'un's funeral service, and then ordered the watch below, but they were not to take any of their clothes off until daylight.

As we left the poop the second mate said to me: "Go and find Jack, I saw him near the galley when that first sea came aboard." I looked in the saloon and then along through the sail-locker and in our cabin, but there were no signs of Jack, and I got sick at heart with the fear that he also had been lost. I crept along the deck, enquiring from the few hands I passed, but they had not seen him, and looked into the galley, where I found the cook huddled up still in a veritable frenzy of fear, but there was no sign of Jack. Next was the carpenter's shop, and there wedged up between the benches was poor Jack; his face was very white and he was obviously about to collapse. He burst into tears when I caught hold of his arm to take him aft, and I very nearly did the same.

"Did they get him?" he asked, and we discovered that he had been thrown against the rail just as the bos'un was washed by. Jack never recovered from that shock, and he was the quietest man aboard for the rest of the trip.

The captain decided to make straight for Valparaiso, and some three weeks later we lifted Aconcagua, a mountain 22,000 feet high, and



ran into the bay and dropped anchor on May 28, 1904, after a passage of fifty-three days. I was stroking the gig when the captain went ashore to give in the ship's papers and to wire the owners, and he told me that he was sure the ship had gone when she broached to for the second time and that I was never likely to go through a similar experience and live to tell the tale. The ship looked badly battered from the shore and the absence of the after-spars gave her a drunken rakish appearance, and soon attracted a crowd of question-asking sightseers. The tale lost nothing in the telling, more especially as the first man we told it to was so touched with our "heroism" that he gave us a bottle of whisky.

Valparaiso is a Spanish corruption of The Vale of Paradise, and well does the place deserve the name. Clustered on a semicircle of hills that dip sheer into the bay and thus provide a nice clean waterfront, and backed by range upon range of mountains culminating in that mighty giant Aconcagua, it offers every variety of scenery. Its importance is due to its proximity to Santiago, the capital of Chile, and it is also a sort of junction for coastal traffic.

Unloading and refitting kept us in port for nearly five months, and it was not until October 21 that we set sail for Sydney, with some twelve hundred tons of sand ballast. We were to go in dry-dock in Sydney, but then had no idea of our next movements.

One day a smudge of smoke on the horizon

slowly lifted itself into a very smart little battleship, and as she came nearer we made out the name through the glasses. It was the *O'Higgins*. Imagine that dear old Irish patronymic for a battleship of Chile, and its sister-ships with such pretty names as Esmeralda and Santiago. In fact O'Higgins was an Irishman who settled in Chile in the early part of the nineteenth century and did such magnificent work that nearly a hundred years later they named their best ship after him. Soon after the fleet had moored, a regatta was organised, and amongst the events was a swimming race over five hundred metres. This event was dignified with the title of Championship, and it was with very little hope of success that we put our names in, and the remotest spark of chance seemed to disappear when we read such names as Ignacio Pastene, Pedro Gonsalvez and Juan Demarques in the published list of entries. Men with names like that could surely swim like fish. The first prize was an "object of art" or its value of seventy-five pesos in cash. When the day arrived nearly one hundred men lined up along the rail of the Captain of the Port's yacht and, at the terrific report of a rocket gun, dived in. We were much too close together and swimming was impossible. A foot caught me in the mouth and I felt a hand in the middle of my back pressing me down, but I had played much water polo, and getting to the surface I literally clambered over a number of struggling competitors and slid off their backs into clear water ahead, and knowing absolutely

nothing about my position in the race then, I settled down to a long steady stroke while I got some wind back. I soon reached a canvas obstacle stretched between two boats, and obeying the signal of a frantic dago on one of the boats, turned back towards the yacht, to find myself almost instantly in a regular shoal of swimmers. I dived and came up clear and settled down *again* suddenly to run plop into another swimmer. This was Plasmon, and he shouted: "Go on, you're leading." I just managed to last out to the yacht where at least fifty excited Chileños tried to get hold of me at the same time and drag me aboard, and a roar of laughter burst out as it was seen that I had lost my bathing-slips in the struggle. Before I was out of the water Ignacio arrived, and clambering up alongside me poured forth a torrent of excited abuse, finishing up by pushing his face so close to mine that, in backing away, I fell overboard again. I presumed he was complaining about some incident in the preliminary scrap, but by the time I got aboard again he had been hustled below and the skipper told me that I was the winner. No more swimming with dagoes for me, thank you. The object of art was duly spent the same evening.

Soon after this we had a very bad time, for smallpox broke out and six of our men were taken off to hospital and the rest of us forbidden to go ashore. Jack Austin was still in the town, and he kindly sent us off a compendium of games and a book describing how to play hundreds of

card games, and we soon settled down to a quiet time of work, picquet, poker and cribbage.

At last we were cleared by the Health Authorities, and the six sailors came back, looking none the worse, and with them came a bos'un to take the place of the poor chap who had been washed overboard.

## CHAPTER IX

### THROUGH THE ISLANDS

“**B**OS’UN, a man up each mast and cast loose.” The familiar orders rang out from the poop and for an hour or so all hands were busy hauling on sheets and halyards until, when every sail was set, the towline was cast off and once again we were at sea with our head pointed for Australia. Owing to the prevailing westerly winds down south, ships westward bound keep well away to the northward and pass close by a number of islands.

The new bos’un was the toughest bit of humanity I ever set eyes on. His name was Rollins, but owing to his bright red little ball of a pug nose he was nicknamed “Cherry.” He was very keen on the game of picquet and used to spend a lot of his time playing with one of us in the cabin. He said that during the Boer War he had made a good living by finding corpses and smashing their features into unrecognizability and then, knowing that every Boer was fighting, taking the remains to the nearest farm-house and getting a few shillings from the weeping women who thought it was really one of their menfolk. It finally got too hot for him when a number of the corpses he had so kindly brought in turned up alive. And he told us this ghastly story just as we would say that we had a shop in the village.

He was a devil to the men under him, and



before we had been at sea a week there were murmurings amongst them and whispered threats of what they would do to him ashore. He never spoke to a man without casting a reflection on his parentage, using a very objectionable term of abuse that, curiously enough, is very much used at sea.

We passed within three miles of the coast of Juan Fernandez, the home of Robinson Crusoe. The coast is precipitous and forbidding, and from the sea there are no signs of the beauty so ably described by Defoe. The only signs of life were great volumes of smoke curling away from many points where, according to the captain, kelp or seaweed was being burned. Crusoe was the first but by no means the last prisoner on the island, for it was used as a prison for political offenders for many years by the Chileños. Five hundred miles from the mainland it was nothing short of a miracle of seamanship and navigation for those savages to come out in small canoes and so rudely disturb the idyllic solitude of Messrs. Crusoe and Friday.

About a hundred miles to the westward is another island, Mas a Fuera, or "farthest from the land," which we lifted as a smudge on the horizon as we passed to the southward.

We sailed within half a mile of the coast of Easter Island, and with the aid of the cabin telescope we imagined we could make out those extraordinary monuments that have so puzzled the antiquaries. The coast is very rocky and forbidding, and it appeared impossible to land

anywhere that we could see. I was at the wheel part of the time we were passing, and the captain told me that a friend of his had been in command of a ship that took an exploration party there some years before and so he had heard a lot about the place. These monuments stand forty feet above the ground and are mostly carved to resemble human faces on such a scale that the chin is only ten feet above the ground, and all over the back of the head are undecipherable hieroglyphics. The features of these faces are very unlike the Polynesian or Kanaka features, more like a beetle-browed Irishman, the captain said, and they are probably the last relics of a race long since extinct.

A little later we hove-to off Pitcairn Island, and about fifty of the islanders came out in two steel lifeboats that had been presented to them by Queen Victoria when the descendants were officially pardoned for the mutiny of their ancestors a century before. We did a great trade with them for the eggs, fruit, coral and hand-painted mother-of-pearl shells that they brought off.

The most potent "coin" were bibles and prayer-books, next came highly coloured garments and handkerchiefs and then salt meat, but tobacco was valueless. The islanders are all non-smokers and total abstainers and are intensely religious. A missionary schooner comes down from the States about every six months to attend to their spiritual needs, and every now and then a ship heaves to for an hour or so.

Well, they took every Bible and Prayer Book off the *Spindrift*.

For a suit of light pink "anti-tropical-rays" underwear, two bordered handkerchiefs and an old rugger jersey I got a basket of about seventy eggs, more fruit than I could lift, a finely woven straw hat and ten large mother-of-pearl oyster-shells with primitive paintings of the island on the pearly interior, and a book of the history of the island signed by the then Governor Adams. And I sold the shells for twenty-five pounds when we reached Sydney.

The bos'un got into a long argument with Adams about the folly of growing but not using tobacco. "Why not sell it to *us* even if *you* don't use it," he said, and Adams majestically replied: "That would be an even greater sin." And then the bos'un, tapping his forehead, added the word "bughouse" to the islander's vocabulary.

The six original founders, the saved mutineers from H.M.S. *Bounty*, took unto themselves Kanaka wives, and the present folk more resemble Kanakas than white people. Despite much intermarrying their physique is fine, but intellectually they are just a crowd of happy and charming children, and they gleefully clapped on to the ropes to help us to set sail. At that time there were about one hundred and forty souls on the island, which has an area of five square miles. There were so many bananas aboard, and they all ripened at the same time, that the cook was

hard put to it to know what to do with them all. He put them in every dish, and even the soup had a strong banana flavour.

The bos'un told me that he and Mac once tried to get permission to live on Pitcairn but were refused. He was always talking about this Mac, and one day I asked him : " Who was Mac, anyway ? "

" Mac was the finest man God ever put breath into. I was going down a street in 'Frisco once when a *third*-storey window was hurled up, a body shot out and the window closed with a crash. I watched the body hit the sidewalk, and said : ' Say, what did ye come out that way for ? ' Those was the first words I ever spoke to Mac. He said he was playing poker with a crowd of squareheads, and when he declared four kings, one of 'em said : ' Let's see 'em.' Mac replied : ' We're all honest men here and it ain't usual to doubt a man's word. When I say I've got four kings I've *got* four kings, and that's all about it.' A little while later this same squarehead, at the top of some tall bidding, claimed four kings, and Mac said : ' Beaten you. I've got four aces.' ' You was a berloddy liar,' says the squarehead. ' I've got one ace here,' and he showed it. So then they threw poor Mac out of the window. Mac asked me would I give a hand to throw *them* out of the window, and I said I was in up to the hub with any shamozzle against *any* squarehead. So Mac pulled up a spike out of the garden railings and I snaked down about ten feet of lead



pipin' from the wall, and got wet through a-doing it too! Then we went upstairs and piled into them squareheads, and we was getting on a treat until I hit a bloke so hard that the pipe coiled round his head and I couldn't get it off, and then they threw us both out of the window."

After that, despite the risk of a riot, we used to make him show his quints and fours as he declared them at picquet, but he only used to laugh, saying that he didn't *need* to cheat, for he could beat the bunch of us without *any* cards.

"But, bos'un, why was he the finest man that ever breathed?"

"Well, after that we went into partnership, salmon-fishing with other people's nets, and then we hoboed across to New York, and then away up into Canada and did a bit of navvyin' on the Canpac, and from there I come back alone. There was a lot of Eyetalian workers on the Canpac, and one night we has a dust up in a saloon there. A fight got up between a Britisher and one of these dagoes, and when the dago showed a knife all hands piled into the arena and anybody fought anybody that was handy. I saw Mac on his back with a big dago holding his throat and going to knife him, and I got the dago a crack over the head with a lump of iron just as the knife sunk into Mac. The dago went out straight off, but Mac lived for an hour. Nobody except me and Mac knew really who had killed that dago, and so Mac says: "You



push off at once and I'll make a dying confession that I done it"; and poor Mac died, and nobody ever suspicioned that I had anything to do with it. And then I worked my way right down through Mexico and Peru down to Valparaiso, and I ain't going back to Canada any more, but just you give me a chance to have a go at a dago, that's all."

Every few days we passed close to land, mostly uninhabited coral atolls. These islands, lapped by the bluest of blue water breaking in a snow-white surf against silvery sand, are set like beautiful jewels about the Pacific. A fringe of waving coco-nut palms is often the only vegetation, but small birds with multi-coloured plumage fly out and settle about the rigging, chattering and screeching and apparently as much pleased to see us as were the Pitcairn islanders. Juan Bautista, Rurutu, Hull Isle, Mangain, Raratonga, Beveridge Isle, Eua, Norfolk and Howe Islands were all lazily dropped astern in due course as we flapped our way through glorious balmy weather. If there is a heaven on earth, it surely must be one of the islands in the South Pacific where the copper-skinned, physically perfect Kanaka, almost alone of mankind, gambols about in perfect freedom of body, and of mind, unless he has fallen under the spell of the missionary and his eternal follower, the brewer or distiller.

One evening at the main hatch Cherry told us that when he was a boy on an American ship

running from Portland to New Zealand, it was just in sight of Norfolk Island, which we were then dropping astern, that he saw a wave a hundred feet high, and this was followed by another one ninety feet high, and then one eighty feet high, and so on, in drops of ten feet, back to a dead calm.

“ That wall of water come rushing towards us with a noise like a million cannon going off, and stood up against us sheer like the side of a house. We was drawn in and shot stern first up that wave so fast we couldn’t breathe, and over the top and cracking down the other side just like we had been dropped out of the sky. And all sorts of things was falling straight away from the deck as if we was upside down. Then comes another one, and away over the switchback again, until we was all giddy, and afterwards we found men had had their false teeth drawn clean out by the wind. Curiously enough she didn’t take much water, them seas was too durned busy to waste any time fooling about and breaking. It was a race round the world I believe, and that first wave was having to go some to keep its place. There never was such waves and there never will be again, because when we got to Auckland we heard they was caused by an island called Krakatoa blowing itself clean off the map. Where there was a mountain ten thousand foot high you couldn’t get bottom now, and that sort of thing ain’t going to happen every week.”

“ When was that, bos’un ? ”

"Eighty-four."

"Krakatoa blew up in eighty-three."

"I ain't talking about when it blew up, I'm talking about the waves it made. Why, the air was so full of dust and bits of that island that the sunsets was most astonishing for years after. Them waves wasn't erected in a day, I'll bet, but mebbe it was only eighty-three, I was only a kid anyway."

"All right. Did you lose any teeth?"

"No, and I ain't lost any since either. A man in a scrap in Mexico or Peru would be badly off if he hadn't got all his teeth. You get your teeth well into a man's ear and you're going to beat him, unless of course he's got his into yours as well."

"Those dagoes must be a dirty lot."

"So they are, but it ain't no good arguing about it. You got to fall in with their ideas and behave yourself polite or you'll be pie-canned slick off."

One of the treats on a sailing ship is the second dog-watch, from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. every evening. All hands have had their tea and got cleaned up a bit, and in fine weather congregate about the main hatch, and do odd jobs such as sewing on patches, or making models of ships to be put in bottles. All the time wonderful yarns are being spun, and now and then there is horse-play or some contest in physical strength. Black Peter was always prepared to bet innumerable plugs of tobacco that nobody could bend his arm. The bos'un said he might not be able

to bend it, but he'd bet his payday he could break it.

Slushy, the cook, was a great orator. He had collected a lot of yarns in his varied career and he always told them as if he was one of the people concerned. He never started off: "Have you heard——" He served them up like this:

"Once I was cook aboard the brigantine *Firefly*. Running between Samoa and the Pacific coast we was, and when I say running I mean running. That ship could travel faster in a calm than this rattletrap in a gale, and right astern too. Her galley was a dream and she fed very well too. You simply couldn't spoil grub in that galley. . . ."

"It must have been a dream, all right, if *you* couldn't spoil it."

" . . . There was a big fat chap in the fo'c'sle. Rogers his name was. William Rogers, I think, but of course he was always called 'Fatty.' We had just got back to Seattle after a round trip and I was coming back to the ship one night when I see Fatty, looking very used up, leaning agin some palings. 'Hallo!' I says, 'what's the matter with you?' Then he told me a wonderful yarn about being thrown out of a saloon called 'Billy the Mug's.' It was called that because it was the first place in the States to sell a large schooner of beer for five cents. Fatty said five men set about him because he said 'Frisco was a better place than this Seattle. So they told him to go back to 'Frisco, and they



give him a good start by slinging him clear over the sidewalk. . . ."

"So it is a better place. Seattle's a . . ."

"You shut up. I'm telling this event. I said to Fatty that if it was me I'd go back and do a bit of slinging meself, and I was ashamed of him, a shipmate of mine, just lazing around, sniffing, after such a outrage. By and by Fatty got all worked up into a howling rage and said he was going back to sling them blighters out that slung him out. He said he only wanted to get that five, but he was so mad that he might go too far unless I went back and helped him. So he arranges for me to count 'em as they come out, and when five was out I was to go in and tell him and then he would come back aboard quietly. So we walked back to 'Billy the Mug's' and Fatty goes in, very briskly, while I stayed outside.

"Directly Fatty got inside there was a regular tear-up and it sounded to me like a lot of bumblebees gorn crazy. Suddenly a pot come whistling through the window just over my head, and almost immejately the swing doors was burst open and a man came flying, all ends up, out into the middle of the road. I shouted out 'One,' very loud because I wanted Fatty inside to hear me, and then the man in the road picked himself up and says: 'Shut up, you ruddy fool, it's me again.' And then I see it was Fatty, and I was so disgusted I went aboard by meself, and Fatty never came back to the ship. I heard later he went off on the *Bonito*



to Japan, sealing, and that he was drowned out there."

The boatswain's mate, Wilson, was an awful old bore. When telling a yarn he would go off into the most uninteresting details, telling them all with the meticulous accuracy of the good liar. He was always careful to mention how long he was on any ship, and one evening we calculated that, on his own showing, he was about a hundred and fifty years old. He would ramble on :

"When I was on the *Thermopylae*, one of Green's ships, running with wool from Port Melbourne to Gravesend, I had a funny experience. I was sixteen years with that ship and I knew the owners quite well. We had run home in a hundred days, and our best day's run was over three hundred knots, across the Indian Ocean, too. She steered fine that ship did; they said it was because she had bevel gearing in the wheel box, but I don't know, I've been with bevel gearing before, and the ship was a bitch to steer, just jumped about like a pea in a frying-pan all the time. Spicer was the captain's name, but I expect he's dead by now. He was a good captain, and many a time I've seen him give a hand with the wheel or jump aloft when some gear parted. He was a very religious man, and he used to haul all hands aft to church every Sunday. . . ."

"Once or twice?"

"Once only, in the morning, but it used to last . . ."

"That's nothing. I was on a ship once and the old man was a religious lunatic. We was expected to be praying *all* day. One day I was putting a splice in a new foresail foot-rope and that crazy old devil come along and says : 'It's all for God, Doyle, it's all for God.' And I said, 'And so it ought to be considering the trouble I've had with it,' and the old fool stamps off muttering something about the conquests of Satan."

Old Wilson would suffer such interruptions very patiently, and immediately they were finished he would go on :

"I learnt lots of hymn toones, like 'Abide with me.' That was my favourite, it's a pretty toon."

Then he would begin to hum his idea of the tune. Two or three would get up and clear off to join the boisterous crowd round the cook and the bos'un, but Wilson did not really care if nobody stayed to listen to his yarn, and he would sing-song on :

"We had good pay-days, and one night I met a man called Fletcher off the *Melton Abbey* which was lying at the top of the basin in Tilbury. She was a natty little craft with painted ports and white spars, and she was sold to the Norwegians later on. This Fletcher come from a place called Ware, not far from my town of Hertford, and so we was sort of townneys. He knew lots of people I knew, and we was enjoying ourselves talking quietly in a little pub in Burdett Road, the "Cherry Tree," if I remember

rightly, although it seems to me the "Cherry Tree" is a little nearer to the Aldgate end. Anyway . . ."

A few more would clear off at this. The first time I very politely sat through the whole story. He was really just talking to himself, but every now and then he would chuckle and you'd think something good was coming at last. Usually it was only time that finished his yarn, and he would still be mumbling some yarn when eight bells was struck and he was mooching along the deck to turn in. And yet that first story he told me was a good one. While they were in that pub a man came in and they noticed that his hand was bound up in a blood-stained handkerchief. Blood was coming so fast that it dripped into a little pool on the floor, and when the man noticed this he put down his glass and left the pub, and Wilson and his friend set out after him and had a great chase all over the east end of London. And later Wilson and his friend shared the fifty pound reward that they earned for giving information that led to the arrest of a man wanted for manslaughter.

It is a sort of religion with all sailing-ship sailors that the last ship they were on is the best ship afloat, and this one, that is the one on which they express the opinion, is the worst ever heard of from every point of view. Ships pass across their lives to be promoted to a romantic pinnacle of excellence. It is amusing to hear this old creed asserting itself:

"We've got a chap that was aboard you for

two voyages, and he says you're a grand ship, feed like fighting cocks, and sail—why, she's a witch."

Never mind who that chap is, you are safe in betting that when he was aboard your ship he swore it was the durndest old deathtrap and starvation and slavery ship that ever went to sea.

The sailmaker was very economical with his tobacco, and used to spend most of the dog-watch drying his chews ready for smoking the next day. Nobody ever took the pipeful of baccy that he was always offering. One evening the bos'un affectionately called him "A mouldy-headed biscuit-eating old sewer," and the sailmaker unwisely made a rush at the bos'un, only instantly to find himself flat on his back with some fourteen stone across his chest. The bos'un made him say:

"Jack jumped off the jib-boom into the jolly boat with the young lady's jade jewellery."

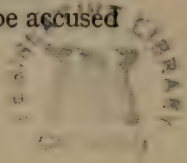
The sailmaker was a squarehead, and roars of laughter greeted his effort:

"Yack yoomped off der yib-boom into der yolly boat mit der jung lady's yade yewellery."

"Nobody said anything about yoomping. Come on, out with it."

After about ten repetitions the bos'un let him up, and that started a most astonishing argument about languages.

As a rule the very best of good temper and feeling prevails, and men allow themselves to be called the most awful names and to be accused





of the worst crimes without a sign of protest. Sometimes the ragging would go a bit too far and a scrap would get started, but everybody rushed in as a peacemaker and a round of laughter soon dispelled the trouble.

Black Peter had the curious habit of saying "Yes, dat's so" when he really meant "Yes, I see." Cherry had some astonishing stories concerning natural history phenomena which he claimed to have observed. He would say, in the middle of some yarn about cleaning up a crowd of policemen:

"... and this bloke was suffering very bad from wiffins."

"What are wiffins, bos'un?"

"Wiffins is a little insect built up like a weevil, only smaller, and it's got eight jint's instead of seven in the rear ancillary. It lives in niggers' hair, but if that nigger gives up eating curry and rice, all them wiffins push off at once. . . ."

"Yes, dat's so," Black Peter would say, much to the bos'un's surprise.

Then this would start a lot of yarns about insects and how wonderful they were. You would hear of bugs that chased the entire crew off a ship and pursued them some distance ashore, or of a breed of maggots from penguin flesh that ate clean through the bottom of a ship, a wooden ship, mind you, and sunk her. And all these wonderful incidents would be led up to in the same apparently true sort of yarn:

"When I was in Kobe, on the old *Trident*, I met a man off a little schooner what ran between . . ."



We had a delightful fairweather passage, sauntering amongst the islands, with only a gentle breeze all the time, and sighted the Sydney Heads on January 15, 1905, after a passage of more than eighty days. A tow-boat drew alongside about ten miles from land and the usual bartering through megaphones took place.

" Good day, captain. Where are you from ? "

" Valparaiso ; where are you from ? "

" Sydney. Shall I throw you a line ? "

" What for ? "

" You want to get in this week, don't you ? "

" I don't want your line for that, I thought you had come out to bring me some newspapers. I'll be in before you."

" Don't you believe it, captain. I know this coast and it's going to blow from the southward shortly, and you'll find yourself wallowing around New Guinea. Come on, now. I'll take you in for a hundred and your line."

" Go to hell."

The tow-boat draws off as if to leave us to our fate, but a smudge on the horizon denotes another tow-boat racing towards us, and a little later he pulls alongside and shouts :

" All right, captain, a hundred and *my* line."

" My price is twenty now and ten when that other boat gets here, and your line. Take it or leave it."

" Throw us your heaving line."

Slerripp, out goes the snaky heaving line, and soon the towline is made fast and all sails

taken in and the yards trimmed square. We dropped anchor in Rushcutter's Bay and a little later towed down to Mort's dry-dock in Balmain.

## CHAPTER X

### A STOWAWAY

**N**EXT morning a madly struggling negro was flung on to the deck from the quay-side and several policemen jumped aboard after him, followed by a number of the idlers always to be found around docks, holding up hydraulic cranes or keeping down huge bollards. The noise brought the mate on deck, and he stared amazed as the crowd scampered about the deck to form a tightly jammed circle round the nigger.

"What's the matter?" gasped the mate, too astonished even to consign everybody to perdition, as he usually did when excited.

An Inspector fought his way out of the crowd, and going up to the mate, said :

"Lucky we caught him so soon, it would have cost you a cool hundred pounds."

"What would?"

"Letting that nigger get ashore. Haven't you heard of the Act against that sort going ashore?"

"Never seen him before, take him away, go on, get to hell out of this; I don't care if you are an Inspector, you clear off this ship and take that darned nigger with you too."

"Keep your hair on, Mr. Mate. Here."

Everybody lent a willing hand to push the darky towards the poop, and then the Inspector shouted :

"Where did you come from?"

"Walper-razor, sah."

"How?"

"On dis ship here, sah."

He turned to the mate, who was too mad to do anything except send for the bos'un. It took a long time to dig it all out, but finally there seemed no possible doubt that this negro had been a stowaway down on the ballast below, and that the crew, instead of giving him up, had fed him for nearly three months. The mate stormed and raved up and down the deck and said it was impossible; he had been down the holds hundreds of times, and besides the men did not get so much to eat that they were going to feed a nigger with three square meals a day for all that time. What the devil would they do it for, anyway? He said the nigger was a clever bloke and he was just fooling the police, that wouldn't be difficult, and was working to get *away* on the ship, but that he, the mate, would take his oath he never came from Valparaiso. Then the bos'un said:

"This here Maurice . . ."

"Which Maurice?"

"This nigger, he comes from Mauritius and the men call him Maurice. Well, he says when he started from Vallaper-raiso he had over a hundred pounds, and he ain't got a bean now because he had to pay his *fare*."

Then the mate believed it too.

"There you are," said the Inspector, "I am on the right ship after all, Mr. Mate. Now, mark, he ain't allowed ashore under any conditions, and if he does go you'll be fined a hundred

pounds, but he will be brought back here every time even if you *spend* a million on him. That's your warning, so you look after him well. You brought him here and you can damn well take him away again."

Maurice was locked in the sail locker and the mate went below to think over the safest way of breaking the astounding news to the captain when he came aboard in the evening. Unfortunately we did not hear the mate doing it, but we knew the result quick enough, for we apprentices were made responsible for Maurice, and we had to take his food into the sail locker and accompany him on an hour's walk about the decks every day.

Plasmon was night watchman and the mate gave him a revolver to wave about in front of Maurice as an additional incentive to remain where he was. A few nights later two shots brought everybody on deck at the double.

Plasmon had been in the galley warming some coffee when a number of the crew came around the doors and started to yarn to him. They said he was a real hard case with that revolver, and Heaven help poor Maurice if he tried any of his tricks now. They wouldn't like to sail in the same ship when Plasmon was a skipper; they did not mind an ordinary hard case, but he was too tough altogether. And much more like this, until Stockholm Jack came along and said: "It's all right, boys."

An hour later when Plasmon went aft he found the locker door broken open and the bird had



flown. In a veritable panic he seized Maurice's cast-off clothes and rushed up on deck and threw them all over the side. Then he hove a lifebuoy overboard, cast the gig adrift and finally fired two shots into the air. And a devil of a complication this all led to, when, next morning, the police came down to make enquiries and find clues.

The captain called all hands up on to the poop and gave them a red-hot talking to. He said he knew who was doing all this, he knew who Maurice had paid the hundred pounds to, and that if he had to pay he knew where to get it back. And he was going to get that man jailed for trying to break the law. When he had finished, the men slouched sulkily forward, each swearing that he did not know anything about a hundred pounds. They said Maurice only gave ten pounds for the escape.

Maurice was caught when he had nearly reached Melbourne and was brought back in triumph, but the skipper had in the meantime arranged for him to be detained in gaol until the ship sailed, the costs of this proceeding to be deducted from the crew's wages. It was hard luck that the Coal strike broke out just at that time, for Maurice had to spend nearly six months in gaol.

The captain was really very angry with Plasmon and forbade him to go ashore and stopped all advances of money, including some his parents had sent "Care of the Captain." As we had made a lot by selling our curios from Pitcairn

Island, this was not so serious a matter to begin with.

Plasmon, of course, was mad about it, but the part that hurt him most was having the revolver taken away. Cherry used to give him a few shillings now and then, and also used to bring off little treats from ashore. Cherry said it was hard luck, but it would teach Plasmon to keep his eyes open and be a *proper* night watchman and look after the ship's interests like he, the bos'un, always did.

"But don't you let this matter drop, my lad. You stick at it until you find out who really did the dirty on you, and then you sail in and wallop hell out of him. That is if he ain't too big for you, of course."

Sydney harbour, with a coastline of over two hundred miles and innumerable little bays and inlets of surpassing beauty with the green verdure growing right down to the water's edge, is a veritable paradise for youth, and we spent every leisure hour roaming around, sailing, fishing or swimming. It was summer-time and the heat was such as to make bathing all day pleasant. The huge crowds of mixed bathers at Coogee did not appeal to us, and we were there only once, and then as the captain's guests at a sports carnival. My success at Valparaiso had given the skipper, and me, an exaggerated idea of my prowess, and I was entered for a quarter-mile race against the crackerjack swimmers of Australia, the skipper having paid the fees.

The course had a turn at the half-way, and in

the draw I drew the outside position and so could not see any of the other men until we turned, for I swam on my left side. The pistol went and we dived, and I just lifted my head to get the position of the turn and then settled down to swim the race of my life. As I turned I looked around and could not see a soul. Golly, I thought, I have got a fine lead. Down went my head, and nursing myself until fifty yards from the post I then put in a magnificent spurt and finished the course going absolutely all out. Hallo ! why no cheering ? Ah ! there it is ; no, surely that's *laughing*. I looked up and there were six or seven men in dressing-gowns, some of them smoking cigarettes and looking in a tolerant fashion at poor puffing me. They had been out of the water for about two minutes and I had been beaten by some two hundred yards, and that last desperate sprint of mine had very much amused them. Eight of them had finished within a few yards, in a second outside world's record, and the ninth, me, had delayed the rest of the programme. I dodged the others and went back to the ship by myself.

A fortnight later we towed up to Newcastle. The night before, Cherry had been brought aboard with his nose practically kicked off his face ; some of our men had met him. Once again we went alongside at Siberia to discharge our ballast, and shortly after, a strike broke out amongst the miners and all loading ceased, and it was not until July 2 that we were again fully loaded with coal for Valparaiso.

Ships kept coming in and soon they were moored three abreast near Siberia. We were the outside of a tier including the *Palgrave*, once the biggest British sailing ship and built with a midship section, just like a steamer, and the *Daylight*, the first sailing ship to be fitted with water-ballast tanks. Between them these ships carried fourteen apprentices, and while our money lasted we easily found plenty to do to pass the time.

One night Cherry came back very drunk and attempted to turn into the bos'un's bunk on the *Daylight*, but the real owner was already sound asleep in it. Cherry, as was his custom, called him the most terrible names, shouting all the time at the top of his voice, and very soon had all the crew out chasing him over the rail. He was finally flung over on to the deck of the *Palgrave* and straight off tried to turn in with the incensed bos'un. This man did not only talk to Cherry but he hit him in the eye, with the result that Cherry saw real red and set about everybody that was handy. The hullabaloo woke our ship's company and we looked over the rail to see about forty men struggling, apparently with a centipede, and from out of the whirling mass of arms and legs bubbled, every now and then, a most astonishing eruption of Cherry's own particular brand of profanity. The mate was next to me and he asked what it was all about. I told him it was Cherry coming aboard after a night of it, and then the mate told me to go down and get him aboard *quietly*.



I fought my way through the struggling mass until I found Cherry's battered face nearest to mine, and then, after a crack each side of the head, I decided to use diplomacy. I said:

"Come on, bos'un, you think I'm Mac and come aboard."

"If you were Mac we'd take and kick the . . . heads off the whole . . . crowd of the . . ."

I went back, and a little while later a tattered body was slung over our rail. Cherry had got aboard.

Next evening he came into our cabin and, without a word, held out two sovereigns. "What's this for?" we asked. "Ah! you go and spend it, the durn stuff only gets me into trouble."

We met our friends the hospital nurses, and I was amazed to think that I had once thought Muriel such an angel. She wasn't a patch on Elsie Kennedy, a barmaid at the "Criterion" in Hunter Street. And so I told her of the great passion that had since evaporated, and she was much amused, and told me that had I said anything to her she would have smacked my face. So!

We used to heat water for washing by blowing through it a little steam from the donkey boiler. Feltham was doing this, and the steam coming too slowly he kicked the cock and the elbow joint on the blowout pipe spun round and shot the kerosene tin full of hot water right into his face. He was very badly cut and scalded and had to be rushed off to the hospital; it was some five weeks before he got out, and he was nursed by



Muriel. And he went through what I had been through, and he said she kissed him when he left. Bruno said, So would anybody.

Soon our allowances were spent and we had a very thin time. Five months in port is too long anyway, but it is just hell when you have no money. One day we had a windfall, for one of the Agent's clerks gave Plasmon a sovereign and Plasmon promised to send him picture postcards from the ports we touched at. We all pushed along to a little pub in the outskirts of Stockton and had a jolly evening, and we also learnt that a select few could get into this pub in the closed hours by means of a special signal and the back door. Next Sunday we went along and the signal worked all right and we were soon comfortably ensconced inside. A very short and very broad man came up to me and said: "Hallo, sonny, have a drink with me?"

I did not remember seeing him before and thought it was a case of mistaken identity, and so I said: "But I don't know you." The result was astonishing, for saying, "Oh, don't you, beegod," he took off his coat with marvellous speed and forthwith gave me a punch in the face that sent me flying across the bar. Australia is a bad place to try and be uppish. But I wasn't trying to be uppish and looked like getting a good hiding for just being natural, but the boss very soon settled all noise by threatening to clear us all out. It came out later that we had treated him to a drink the night before. We were all soon friends again, and when we got aboard I

found five shillings in my pocket which must have been dropped in there by that man. Sailors are indeed funny people.

One night the last steam tram, booming along the lower end of Hunter Street like a trans-continental, very nearly deprived us of the need to hurry in order to catch the last ferry. The tram pulled up with a rattle and a long thin body uncurled itself and leant out of the cab and enquired if we were a "suicide outfit." It was Slim.

We jumped aboard and went on to the depot, and after he had backed the tram into its stable we walked across to the small house in which Slim lived, and where he said there was plenty of "neck oil" if we did not mind taking it straight from the bottle. We did not.

For the man who does not like drink for its own sake—and no beginners do—but drinks because he finds that when he cuts out the booze he deprives himself of a lot of that froth of life always associated with John Barleycorn, drinking straight from the bottle has its advantages. You can hold your end up as a "blown in the glass" member of the brotherhood of the hobo with very little liquor. A glass displays only too clearly the exact amount consumed, but the bottle to the lips and a few guggles, real or false, are accepted as evidence of merit although the drinker may not have permitted a single drop to pass his lips. And always there will be one amongst the crowd who wants the booze, and is careless of its adjuncts, and he takes advantage of straight

from the bottle to take about three times his usual glass dose and so covers the delinquency of the shirker.

After the bottle had been circulated, Slim said :

“ I knew you was in port because the other night a mad man as big as a house fell into my cab and says, ‘ You drive me to the *Spindrif*t or I’ll kick you to hell,’ and I says, ‘ Well, there ain’t much difference, I been on the *Spindrif*t meself,’ and then he flared up and tells me I’m insulting him and he reached for me, but he was so blamed drunk that he fell in the coal-bin, and he stayed there until we got to the dee-poe.

“ We couldn’t get him off the tram, he was all fists and feet, and so we left him there all snuggling down in the coal and arguing and cussing away to himself. Once we nearly got him, but when he was half in and half out the seat of his pants where I had hold give way and I went flying back with a bit of rag in me hand and he shot back into the coal.

“ About three o’clock in the morning my door was nearly beat in, and as soon as I opened it, in falls this same stiff flat on his face and starts trying to swim up the passage. I sat on the stairs and watched him for a bit, and when he got tired he clambered into a chair, but just as I was hoping he’d go off to sleep he flared up agin about a lot of pirates tearing off his pants in handfuls, and then he lepp up and emptied his pockets and slung cigarettes, mostly busted,

money, matches and all sorts of junk all over the room. Then he ripped off his pants and said he was going to take mine, with or without me, just as I liked, becos he said he wouldn't interfere with *any* man in his own house.

"I skipped upstairs and snatched an old pair from behind the door and give 'em to him, but we couldn't get the blamed things on to him anyway. He was sobering up considerable be now and he takes out a penknife and just nicks the seams, and then we got 'em on looking just like a pair of busted tights and no better than his own pair that was missing astern. As he went out he said I could keep the cigarettes against the pants. Well, there was nearly a quid in money too, so giving him two bob so's he could pay for the first ferry, I closed the deal. I ain't seen him since, but who is he, anyway? "

"Cherry, without any manner of doubt. He is our new bos'un."

"Well, you take it from me and don't you scrap with *him*; why, he'd eat you and ask for more."

We assured Slim that even in our wildest moments we had never contemplated a fistic encounter with Cherry, and then he told us bits of his experience since leaving the ship.

Wallaroo to Port Pirie, where he worked as a crane driver on the quay, then up to the Broken Hill silver-mines to drive a locomotive, followed by a short trip "on the wallaby," and then a slack period in the Sydney Domain, and finally to the Newcastle trams, which job he liked and

had kept for over four months. He opined that Australia was a fine country to work in, but it was not a circumstance to the States for the real free and easy hobo existence.



## CHAPTER XI

### ABORIGINES

THE reverend gentleman in charge of the Mission at Stockton was a fine specimen of the type of clergyman that should be sent to deal with such really raw material as sailors. He was one of the few to emphasise the "man" in his title.

He treated us as potential useful, decent men, but never as possible saints, and there was none of that goody-goody-ness and whining incantation so noticeable in most other ports and which does far more to keep the sailor away from the missions than all the attractions of the pub and the tenderloin. His thorough understanding of the men he was trying to influence was based on practical experience with the very large number of sailors constantly passing through Newcastle from the sailing ships engaged in the coal trade between Australia and the West Coast of South America, the route to which nearly every sailing ship has since been banished, and where, despite a constant supply of imperishable cargo and steady winds, it is fighting a losing battle with its steam-driven rival.

One day Mr. Hales came aboard to tell us that he was going down to Sydney over the week-end, to visit his uncle who, he said, was one of the real pioneers of Australia, and if we would like to come he was sure his uncle would be charmed, for he had often suggested that his place would make a nice picnic ground for the officers and

apprentices so well ministered unto by his nephew. Mr. Hales offered to ask our captain's permission, but smilingly gave way when we explained the necessity of maintaining the correct relationship with a man like the skipper, and after a decision had been made by drawing haricot beans, Plasmon went in and had no difficulty in getting permission, although at the same time he brought back an intimation that the old man would have no "durned psalm-singing" aboard his ship.

At midnight we boarded the Sydney steamer, and arriving at 7 a.m. we took breakfast aboard before setting out for Mr. Fairburn's residence, which, an hour later, we found to be a very imposing new house in extensive grounds on the slope of Dobroyd Hill. The view from the verandah embraced the towering Outer Head, and between that and the Inner South Head a long vista of the Pacific Ocean with great breakers rolling ever inwards and leaping in foamy spray about the huge rocks at the base of the cliffs. To the left was Manly Beach, and across the narrow neck another glimpse of the ocean, while away to the right was the beautiful Port Jackson with its innumerable little bays and inlets. Our host was evidently one of the fortunate few and able to put his house where it most suited him, and he had chosen as fine a site as it is possible to conceive.

A wide verandah ran across the back of the house and we sat there at a lunch which was the subject of admiration and grateful recollection amongst us for many months afterwards, and

when the meal was finished we were provided with cigars of such excellence that they were clean wasted on palates that had learned to love Negro-Head and other plug tobaccos.

Then pulling the comfortable cane chairs into a semicircle we started to yarn, and after we had surprised the old man, and ourselves, with some of our experiences at sea, his nephew deftly turned the talk round to Aborigines, and slowly pulling himself into an upright position and becoming suddenly alert and giving a hint of the character that had made him the man he was, Mr. Fairburn entertained us with a description of the least-known people on the face of the earth.

"Thirty years ago I was prospecting in the McDonnell Ranges, many miles to the north of Lake Eyre in South Australia. There was a small amount of traffic along the overland telegraph line and we had centred at a place called Alice Springs. It was a curious experience to be in the midst of one of the wildest and most barren countries imaginable and yet to know that only a few yards away was a station where you could send a message to your grandmother in London, if you wanted to, and get a reply in a few hours, whereas it had taken us nearly two months to work up from Adelaide.

"We found nothing, and since those days many thousands have followed our footsteps and found our luck about those same hills, and we were working along the dry and rocky gorges at the base of the Strangways before giving up the game. One day a black boy came out with

some gear and he brought news that the blacks had run amok up at Barrow Creek, the place where the northern and southern sections of the line met, and a party was setting out at once and going up to rescue the white men and teach the blacks a lesson they would not soon forget.

“ We were equipped for a few days in the scrub and so we set out after them at full speed, and we arrived at Barrow Creek only a few hours after they did. It was February and terribly hot, and taking into consideration the heat, the distance and the scrub we had done a fine ride, but we were hopelessly outclassed by half a dozen men who had got down from Tennant's Creek, a hundred and twenty miles to the north, in twenty-four hours.

“ Two men, the stationmaster and the cook, out of the seven at Barrow Creek had been killed, and judging by the collection of spears and boomerangs it was a miracle that any of them had escaped. The blacks had crept up and attacked them without warning or apparent reason, but no time was wasted in discussing causes, and leaving three men in the station, the rest of us split up into small parties and proceeded to show the black the effects.

“ We shot them down, or rode after them and lashed them until they fell beneath the horses' feet, and for days no black dared show his head. We burnt everything of theirs we could find ; we desecrated their totem grounds ; even their women and children, or their bitches and litters, for they are not really human except in shape,



were taught what it meant to attack a white man ; and those terrified brutes reaped a harvest of a thousand of theirs to one of ours.

“Cruel ! yes, perhaps it was cruel, but that is the last recorded attack made by the jacks on white men, and never have they interfered with the line which runs through the scrub for thousands of miles absolutely unprotected. Some little time back a party went right along the line route and across to Borroloola to collect information about the jack and his habits before he becomes extinct. I see in a lecture they say they are primitive people, as primitive as the Britons in the Stone Age. If that is so, I cannot understand how a Wise God ever permitted the Britons to grow up, for of all the detestable, cowardly, useless, evil-smelling, dirty, ignorant, brutal and low-down animals the aborigine is the absolute limit.

“I know a lot about them, as much and possibly more than any white man, and I’ve never known one of them to do a decent act, even in his sleep. Interesting ! yes, they are interesting just as the sewage problem of Sydney is interesting, but that does not make them pleasant or desirable. James, my nephew here, always tells me I am poaching on his ground when I rampage about the problem of them ever being created, but he does not know them and I do, so I usually ignore this professional jealousy, and if you care to hear it I will tell you more about them.

“ Their entire social intercourse and all their



religious beliefs, with all the weird incantations, ceremonies and magic, were designed and are carried on to maintain a practical enslavement of the young men and all the women. The old men know, and most probably have known for centuries, that all this magic business was a fraud, and, in fact, they never hesitated to invent further magic as it appeared necessary.

“ At a certain age, or after certain performances in the hunting-field, the men are initiated and then they become of the old men, and although they *must* then discover the fraud, they carry on the good work, for naturally enough they are only too willing to support a system not only good enough for their fathers and their fathers’ fathers but which will keep them in idleness and comfort until Twanjerka calls them to the abode of frogs or some other tribal heaven they believe in.

“ Perhaps one day, except that their total extinction will happily forestall the event, a Luther or a Calvin would have arisen amongst them, but the existence of their mad beliefs, and I will tell of these later, is a staggering fact and an everlasting reminder of the depths to which the human species may sink and be satisfied with under bigotry, superstition and unreasoning acceptance of fables, traditions and beliefs.

“ The women have no emancipation to look forward to, although in some districts the old hags are considered good magicians and do a big business in pointing-sticks and the like. These pointing-sticks consist of short pieces of wood or bone ; and after suitable incantation, jiggery-

pokery and yowling, the man who desires to injure creeps through the bushes and points the stick at his unsuspecting enemy and the magic flies from the end of the stick and . . . does nothing.

“ Practically all their magic consists of doing an injury, in a cowardly, sneaking fashion to an unsuspecting enemy, and if they can catch their enemy asleep it is all to the good. They have one stick which is believed to contain the heat of the sun, and when pointed at the enemy the heat leaves the stick and goes into him and proceeds to burn him up inside. Every time I found a jack with a raging fever the others assured me that some enemy had pointed a Chintu, that is a sun-stick. And of course directly I put the brute right with a dose of castor-oil or jollop I became a mighty magician, and they wanted to know if I had any magic that would creep up and stab their enemies in the back while they were asleep, and which they could work from a safe distance.

“ The young man is forbidden to eat such good food as wild turkey eggs and emu fat and eagle-hawk on penalty of becoming deformed or prematurely aged or burnt up by the sun. And here we see the system at work, for there is a grave danger, amounting almost to certainty, that these same penalties will fall upon them if they do not assiduously collect this sort of food and give it to the old men.

“ Now we all know what youth, any youth, is when nice food is about, penalties are a secondary

consideration, but yet we have the astonishing fact that although there is probably no record of the penalties being inflicted, and the tradition has never been believed by the old men, it is believed by the young men to such an extent that in fear and trembling they spend the first thirty years of their manhood providing good food for a lot of lazy old men.

"They have a weird ceremony of knocking a tooth out, which is performed when the aspirant is about twelve years of age. It is done with a stick and a big piece of stone while a number of men sit on the chest and arms of the victim, but there is nothing interesting about it, except the origin of the custom. One day two snakes met at a water-hole and one of the snakes made the suggestion that they would probably be a lot better looking minus one of their front teeth. So they set to and gravely pulled a tooth out of each other and then they decided that they *were* better looking.

"The blacks have always been terrified of snakes, and one of their medicine men, who had overheard the conversation between the snakes, suggested that they should placate the serpent, by following their example. Away like a fire through the scrub this mad custom spread across the entire continent, and for many centuries teeth are struck from the mouths of these lunatics, and all the time the snake goes on with his deadly business, and to-day the black is more afraid than ever he was. Is it not wonderful?

"The only useful ceremony they have is one

by which the participants are put under a ban of silence, and can only be released by going off hundreds of miles and stabbing an enemy of the tribe, in the back when he is asleep of course, or by a medicine man who usually removes the ban by hitting the silenced one a sharp blow in the mouth so that he breaks his silence with a howl of pain. That was the only ceremony that I tried to encourage.

"I was never able to discover exactly what rules and regulations they have about marriage, but they are not immoral. At one place I noticed a lot of the women wore little tufts of hair and I was told that these were made from the hair of the men to whom they were to be given, and were worn as an indication to other men to keep off, and of course the tuft was crammed full of magic. In some cases men wore these tufts, and in that case it meant that he had contracted for a woman as yet unborn.

"They have ceremonies lasting days and sometimes weeks, to bring rain, to make the wind blow or to cause a calm, to make yams grow, and indeed for every purpose. Can they make the wind blow or the rain come? No! of course they cannot, but evidence is nothing to them. Their fathers and their fathers' fathers for endless centuries have covered themselves with down and human blood, sat in fires and buried their heads in the sand, and that's good enough. Evidence for or against is of no account, the old men tell them how to do it and what it is



for, and what they can get out of it, and off they go.

"And always the old men have a satisfactory explanation if the ceremony fails. Some spirit or enemy has been at the magic and away they all go on an avenging party or another ceremony. Whatever the old men say is carried out without question or thought.

"The stories connected with some of the ceremonies are very quaint. A man who claimed to raise the wind, and I believe was finally speared, through the back when asleep of course, by an avenging party for raising such a wind that it brought a sand storm and much inconvenienced another tribe, told me how he became possessed of his power, and how he was the most powerful of all the wind raisers, the others were 'gammon' men, and why he never failed. The fact that he always failed had not percolated into the mess of ignorance called his brain, but that only makes him a typical jack, and he told me this wonderful story. Whether he believed it, or how it came to be concocted and believed by all the young men and women, it is impossible to say, but there is no doubt that it has been so believed and handed down for centuries.

"His ancestor, Umwirra, was the nostrils of the great spirit Alcheringa who made all things, and when he died he broke up into sections. The tears of the great spirit became the rain, and the nostrils, Umwirra or the wind. And the eyes became the sun and the belly the earth and so on until every part, including the most



intimate, had turned into some natural element or power. And all the parts sat in solemn conclave to decide how best to carry on the work of the great spirit, and the rain and the wind said they would always stay together.

“Then after many revolutions of the sun Umwirra got old and decrepit and there was grave danger of everlasting calms unless he found a suitable party to carry on his work. Why he should have chosen an aborigine passes all understanding. However, hungry and tired he was resting in a gorge when a woman came to draw water, and she was in child. And she fed Umwirra from her breasts and he cut off all her hair and burnt it up, with doubtless a great deal of magic, and the smoke went up and formed the clouds and the tail of the smoke was put into the hand of the unborn infant so that he and his descendants should for ever control the wind.

“There is a hint of observation in the association of the wind, clouds and rain, but otherwise it is mad and inconsistent and therefore a typical aborigine legend.

“With not even rudimentary signs to record events it is extraordinary how these stories have been preserved and handed down. According to men who have studied the aborigine there is no cohesion or similarity between the beliefs of the various tribes except in the universal magic. With no fear of contradiction and a population of lunatics not only willing but anxious to believe anything, it may be that the old men just invent as they find it necessary to maintain their power

and that, in fact, there is no real tradition, and each generation gravely sits down and fashions its past.

"They have a series of noises that make a rude language sufficient only to deal with concrete facts, although curiously enough they are exceptionally quick at acquiring sufficient English to make them useful about a camp and for conveying messages. They have a large number of signs made with the fingers of one or both hands and amplified with movements of the head and arms, but these deal almost entirely with the food they eat, or the animals that provide the food, and are only used during the bans of silence."

Mrs. Fairburn had come quietly on to the verandah and sitting down had listened to her husband, casting many looks of admiration and love at the fine old man as he talked, and directly he paused she said :

"So you have got him on his favourite subject. He declares he hates the black man, but if love can be gauged by the amount of talk about them, he surely loves them dearly. But tea is ready and I am sure you must be too."

The old man was fully into his stride, and when we were seated at the tea table he went on :

"Indeed, perhaps my wife is right. The black has one gift and one invention to his credit, and they are amazing products of such barren soil. I refer to their power of tracking and the boomerang. As trackers they have no equal, man or animal.

" When engaged in some expedition to stab an enemy, in the back when asleep of course, they wear what are called 'debil-debil' shoes, shaped the same each end and made of emu feathers, and you can well imagine such shoes will not leave much track across typical bone-dry scrub-land, but they leave enough for a jack to follow it with the speed of a horse.

" On one occasion we came upon a crowd of jacks, yelling like madmen round a pole stuck in the ground and throwing themselves on to fires. We learnt that this was the preliminary to a party setting out to avenge the death of one of their men. The death had been caused by magic, as also had the identity of the culprit been established. We rode out with them for some distance and it was amazing.

" A single blade of burnt grass, or one solitary moved stone, the marks of dried water on a rock or the movement or direction of sand in the hollows near the fords was sufficient for the two men who ran ahead of the party to follow a track, absolutely invisible to us, winding and twisting about the scrub as fast as we could ride in comfort. All of them seem equally gifted, for we came to the bed of a river through which a stream some few feet wide was still running, and there they halted. Two men were sent each way, one each side of the water, and in a few minutes a loud 'Wah-wah' indicated that the track had been picked up, and that the fugitive's deliberate running in the water had delayed but not baffled his pursuers.

"When we got back to our camp in the evening the avengers were overdue and the tribe began to fear that somebody had put magic after them, but a little later they arrived and brought with them a number of gory details to prove that they had got the right man. It proved it to them, but there is little doubt that just another innocent victim had been added to the host of those slain by bigotry and ignorance.

"The boomerang is a triumph of aerostatics, and how a thing like the jack came to invent it, and observe and copy what he had done, must ever remain a mystery. In some tribes the young men are encouraged to indulge in mock fights so as to attain greater accuracy, and thus incidentally be able to provide the old men with more and better food. On the left arm is tied a shield reaching from the elbow beyond the finger-tips and made of cane sticks, and then the combatants stand some fifty yards apart and hurl their weapons at each other with terrific force.

"Their agility and dexterity at avoiding the blows or stopping the boomerang are wonderful. The idea is to let the weapon strike the left arm and thus disarm the opponent, but sometimes owing to the direction an attempt to do this would be fraught with grave danger of a cracked skull, and then the man will sink down, he is not supposed to move his feet, and the boomerang will whistle fiercely over his head and in a graceful curve sweep round right into the hands of its

owner, who will throw it again without an appreciable check in its flight.

“ I have seen a jack keep four boomerangs going just as a juggler keeps billiard balls, except that it was a much finer exhibition to witness.

“ I tell you of them as they were in the seventies and eighties ; since then their increasing knowledge of the white man and the usual conquest of the brewer have done much to break up their tribal customs, more especially the magic and the enslavement of youth by the old men. The absence of this discipline added to ravages of drink is having the usual effect, and the black population is rapidly decreasing, and we may reasonably look forward to their complete extinction and the early attainment of our ideal : a White Australia. But every man must be made to realise the danger from the North, where the teeming millions sit in the crowded slums and cast their longing eyes towards this wonderful country of ours. The black is bad, very bad, but he is not crafty and industrious and is therefore easy to deal with, but the yellow man is of a very different calibre, and if they are permitted to come in here the white man will be chased out within a decade.”



## CHAPTER . XII

### THE SEAMAN'S MISSION

**A**FTER tea we climbed to the top of the hill and found a wonderful panorama spread out some four hundred feet below us ; we lay on the grass and watched the sun set and the gradual changing light through the rosy tints, when even the smoky haze over the city seemed to borrow from the beauty of the evening, until the purple shadows crept on from the east and a million lights twinkled and smiled below us.

We semaphored good wishes to a small steamer working out to sea and watched with professional interest the evolutions of small white-sailed boats returning to their moorings, the lazy flannelled figures about the decks reminding us anew of the indescribable joy of the lift of a boat before the breeze. Yes, Mr. Fairburn was right, the aborigine had no right to his country, it was too good for him.

After a dinner that made even that wonderful lunch seem almost commonplace we went to the billiard-room and considerably astonished our host, but not his nephew, who had often seen horny-handed sailors "breaking stone," as he aptly termed it. We played Russian Pool, all against all, but only as a means further to enjoy each other's company, and at times the next to play would decline to take his stroke until some interesting story was finished. Mr. Fairburn soon realised that we knew nothing

about the game and tried to direct the terrific force that we were putting into the shots, and on one occasion he said to Bruno :

“ I should play a cannon. Put top on your projectile and smash the pink to smithereens, half ball, and you ought to ricochet off something and rend the blue asunder or maybe batter the black to pulp.”

At half-past ten we set out to catch the midnight boat back to Newcastle, taking with us pleasant memories of a grand old man and genuine Australian hospitality. While we were playing pool our host had been enlarging upon the opportunities of Australia and the urgency of attracting more people of the right sort to settle and make their lives in the country. He said we ought to consider giving up such a poverty-stricken profession as seafaring and settle there, especially if our people were able to start us off with a little capital, but it must all be done above-board and we must speak to the captain and advise our parents. His parting words were :

“ Now do not forget all I’ve told you and ask the captain directly you get back. Mention my name, but if he says ‘No . . .’ run away.”

On the return journey Mr. Hales told us more about his uncle, saying that he was a well-known authority on the aborigine, which no doubt accounted for the ease with which he gave us that short lecture, and he went on to say :

“ But you must forget his suggestion that you should run away. He has been so successful and happy in the country that he is apt to let

his enthusiasm run away with him at times. It would not be fair to me for your captain to think that I was an immigration agent in disguise, and moreover I do not share my uncle's views of the ease with which success is woo-ed in this country. With a trade or a profession and sufficient capital to choose location there are undoubtedly great opportunities if a man is prepared to work very hard indeed. But to be plain, you boys as yet have only youth and health, and alone they are no more sufficient here than in any older country. There are thousands of sundowners and beachcombers on the wallaby with ample health and strength."

Later Mr. Hales got up a concert at the Mission House, and so great was his popularity and so thoroughly had he organised that nearly every ship in the port had a representative amongst the performers, with the result that entire ship's companies rolled up to encourage and support their man. An excellent orchestra composed of keen local supporters of Mr. Hales' work opened the programme, and then followed a host of items, each one received with tumultuous applause, an amazing volume of noise every time denoting the portion of the hall where the last performer's mates were congregated. Then the ever-smiling and thoroughly happy Mr. Hales would arise, and patiently awaiting the end of the applause, which had redoubled as soon as he got on his feet, announce: "The next item is a song entitled 'Because I Love You,' by Mr. Rollins, boatswain of the *Spindrift*," and a terrific roar

indicated our company, ably led by Black Peter and determined to uphold the noisy honour of their ship against all comers.

Cherry, looking very presentable in a blue jersey, new dungaree pants and a blue coat, walked confidently to the centre of the small stage and ignoring the pianist rushed into the song. The muscles of his great neck could be seen working at full pressure as he literally hurled the words booming across the hall, and all the time the pianist's fingers were scampering up and down the keyboard in a hopeless attempt to keep with the singer. No sooner would the note and the key be found than Cherry would be off on an improvisation of his own, and at last the pianist swung round his stool, and with his hands on his knees and an expression of intense, almost hypnotic, interest on his face watched Cherry complete the song, taking no further part beyond beating time with his toes.

The loudest "All hands on deck" when a gale was threatening instant destruction was but a whisper to this great voice booming, crashing and reverberating about that small corrugated-iron-roofed hall. But it was the star turn of the concert. Cherry with clenched fists and a very red face, with the veins standing out on his throat like knotted cords, his eyes glued to the roof at the far end of the hall, and his features set in a look of fierce determination to see this matter through, ripped out the last few notes and without more ado proceeded to walk off the stage. Mr. Hales jumped up and whispered a few words



to him, and Cherry replied with a vigorous nodding of his head.

Loud and long applause greeted this masterpiece, and in the middle of it Cherry reached his seat, which was close to mine, and joined vigorously in the applause until sheer physical exhaustion finally brought silence ; but the noise broke out afresh when Mr. Hales, before announcing the next item, said that he was sure they would be delighted to know that Mr. Rollins had kindly promised, time permitting, to give another song later on.

Then the beautiful Miss Deering played the " Spring Song," and the chatter ceased and there was a dead silence except for the sweet notes from the violin. An encore, immediately acceded to, because Miss Deering's hours of duty compelled an early departure, brought us a delightful little fantasia from the " Pirates of Penzance," and this also was listened to by some five hundred coarse hardened sailors, charmed into a breathless hush as the glorious music stirred within them thoughts and aspirations to which their daily round made them strangers indeed.

A few more items, including an excellent piece of ventriloquism by a local policeman, whose gift brought him much in demand for these concerts, and Mr. Hales' announcement that time was up, closed a very pleasant evening.

As we were leaving the hall he came over to us and said that he had been asked by the Waratah Rugby Football Club to bring up a team to help pass the heavy hours of idleness due to



the strike, and he wanted to know if any of us would play. Feltham and I had both been to rugger schools and we volunteered to play at any time and in any position, and Mr. Hales said :

“ Thank you, I shall probably put you behind the scrum as we must have plenty of weight forward against those colliers. I have got four forwards, and if I can get another four like them our scrum will aggregate about one hundred and thirty stone.”

Plasmon rushed after Cherry, but much to our regret he refused to play. He said he never had played and he was not going to make a fool of himself. Probably, fortunately for Plasmon, he did not fully appreciate the deep meaning of the latter's, But you sang to-night !

At last a team was got together, but owing to the want of a suitable ground any useful practice was impossible. A ball was given to the mate of the *Imberhorne*, who had been appointed scrum-half and captain, and nearly every evening we used to meet and try to practise passing and kicking, but once again the loyalty of shipmates brought a huge crowd of spectators, who always got so enthusiastic that the team very seldom saw the ball after the first kick. Mr. Hales put the scrummagers through a lot of work against the wall of a small public-house, where the landlord's permission was readily gained when he found that after the practice the team and many of its supporters remained to boast of their performances and swill his fine beer.

At midday on Saturday we met in Hunter Street and boarded the steam tram for Waratah, and some hundred enthusiasts stormed the trams to accompany us. The half-hour journey was spent in much chaffing and banter, while at the back Cherry dispensed nips of whisky straight from the bottle and added an artificial touch to the already boundless natural enthusiasm. We taught them how to yell "Shiiipiiip" as our war-cry and explained the general idea of the game, emphasising to all, and especially to Cherry, that if a man leapt at us when we had the ball and threw us violently to earth while fourteen other men proceeded to trample upon us, it was only part of the game and their assistance would not be required.

Such is the influence and the universality of the reputations of the big schools, that directly the mate learnt where I had been to school he put me wing three, and some vague idea of better team work from apprentices on the same ship placed Feltham as centre on the same wing.

There was considerable difficulty, especially with the boots, in getting the team ready with the odd equipment kindly provided by our opponents. On legs, arms and chests, and during the game on backs and even stomachs, weird and wonderful examples of the tattooer's art were exposed. Mermaids, anchors and hearts in profusion, and here and there a motto or a girl's name recording a love that had long since faded into thin air identified our team to our opponents almost as readily as the wonderful

array of jerseys. One bullet-headed sailor, in the team for physical strength and bulldog tenacity alone, got quite out of temper at the number of times he was called upon to pull up his jersey to expose to admiring eyes a seascape depicting the harpooning of a whale, an artistic atrocity that reached from his shoulders to his thighs. At last to rousing cheers from our supporters we scampered on to the field and the game began.

The first scrum proved beyond all manner of doubt that our forwards knew exactly nothing about the game, but since they had been chosen for sheer weight they were going loyally to rely on that. The scrum-half leapt excitedly about the scrum, shoving a head down here and straightening a stern there, and then shouting "Coming right, ship," threw the ball in. Like a flash it was out to the opposing three-quarters, who raced down the field, but with a furious leap I managed to hurl the wing man into touch almost on our line.

"A man each, ship," shouted the mate for the line-out, and then looked round in bewilderment, for we had apparently shed all our forwards. There they were, still forming half a scrum and charging down the field until they collapsed into a writhing mass of great sturdy legs, arms and bodies. A roar of laughter greeted this unexpected movement and the referee stopped the game while a little explanation was given, and then each man was individually propped against one of the opposing side. The

throw-in was just a signal to our men for a terrific onslaught on anybody that was near by, and while they were thus engaged a man walked over and scored a try between the posts. The kick-off rolled a few feet and the ball was snapped up by a gigantic collier who literally hacked his way through to score again under the posts. Ten points in two minutes promised a record score of some three hundred points.

But our men were getting into their stride, and as the game developed their tackling became very keen and hard. Everybody went high and the meaty sound of a driving hand-off would precede the crash of two bodies as the flash of a gun precedes the sound of the explosion, but it was all good-tempered, robust play supervised by the most lenient referee that ever held a whistle. Half-time found the score 28-0, but we were much the fresher side, and the captain used the interval to explain further to the forwards what they were supposed to do.

He commenced his address by remarking that they surely must be the origin of the saying: Never mind the ball, get on with the game; but assisted by the little practical experience they had had, he was able to be brief but effective, and the good results were obvious directly the second half began.

Our forwards went down in a body in a way that would have warmed the heart of an Irish international, and almost before they realised it they were over the line and the much-tattooed burly sailor was holding the ball to the ground



with his stomach and shouting "How's that" at the top of his voice. It was a try all right, but then there was a little difficulty with the scorer of it, who seemed to think that the ball was his in perpetuity. The goal-kick was a very poor attempt, and almost instantaneously the whole team was scampering up the field after an opponent who had picked up the ball and shot off like a rocket. He was caught, by six men, just beyond half-way, and the game was stopped for a few moments while we saw what had happened to that "ruddy pirate" as our proud scorer called the brilliant but reckless opportunist.

A well-sustained and really creditable roar of "Shiiipiiip" boomed across the field when the game was re-started, and then, when the ball was heeled out on our side for the first time, the mate gave us some idea of his capacity behind a good scrum. He cut through the opposing halves like a hare, and as he was downed he threw a very long pass which bounced from the ground straight into the hands of Feltham, who was travelling full speed and went on to score a brilliant try between the posts. 28-8.

This taste of blood was just what was needed, and the whole side settled down to such bustling rushing play that our rapidly tiring opponents were penned in their own half for the rest of the game, but their tackling was too good to let us increase our score. They took the man and the ball, and in that order too. The no-side found the score 28-8, and thirty tired men limped



off the field to the dressing-room, where great tubs of hot water and an apparently inexhaustible supply of beer soon dispelled all weariness and led to a great deal of argument between our, now, experts.

Mr. Hales was delighted at the result and also at his ability to get another fixture, but unfortunately we expected to sail before the date arrived. It was doubly unfortunate inasmuch as Cherry was so interested in the first game of rugger he had seen that he said he would have played in the next game, provided he could go in the scrum. That's where *he* wanted to be.

Mr. Hales greatly distrusted the forced hot-house type of "conversion" and no attempt was made to push religion down the sailor's throat, either by promising fabulous but under the circumstances most unattractive rewards for a snivelling anæmic life, or by threatening incredible torments for an occasional and gaudy leap from the straight and narrow path. He was very severe on meanness, but his treatment for "booze" and spasmodic lapses from the path of virtue was a manly talk to bring home the shame and the *folly* to the sinner, and to avoid any possible misunderstanding in these talks he used the language of the fallen one.

He worked on the assumption that permanent good growth can only be obtained from soil slowly and carefully prepared, and all his efforts were turned to making the Mission House a centre of healthy attraction, and his aim was the close personal friendship of his scattered flock.

In most ports, if a man going ashore in the evening said he was going along to the Mission, his shipmates would sneer at and distrust him forthwith. In Newcastle a man who sneered at Mr. Hales and his work would stand a very good chance of a thrashing and be looked upon as a really bad man, as he very probably was.

It is a pity that every mission cannot find a Mr. Hales. Every ship that left the port took with it pleasant memories of his genial personality, and from him and his work radiated good fellowship and manly counsel that must have had its effect in every port in the world.

## CHAPTER XIII

### BACK TO CHILE

**A**T last the strike was settled and our turn came to load, and it was wonderful loading too. Everybody was out to make up the lost time, and we could almost see the water rise up her side as wagon-load after wagon-load was shot aboard, and with almost startling suddenness after our long wait we found ourselves at sea again.

Maurice had been sent aboard just before we sailed and was put to work about the decks, training for twenty years in gaol, as the bos'un said. As a matter of fact we were surprised to observe how decently the bos'un dealt with that nigger, who really had such an easy time that he got a swelled head. One morning I was hauling a keg of paint up from the forepeak when Maurice passed by.

"Give me a hand, darky."

"Who's you, captin? You kin go to the debil."

I went for him, but the mate arrived on the scene and told us to break away, saying that there was plenty of time for fighting in the watch below. After tea, when I had forgotten all about the incident, Black Peter came to the cabin door and asked if I was ready, as Maurice was waiting for me by the main hatch. I peeled to just a singlet and a pair of dungaree pants and went along to find the nigger swelling and puffing before the men, saying what he was

going to do to me, and the best way of disposing of what little he would leave lying about. He stripped very well and I realised I had a big job on hand. Cherry took charge of the fight and set us going by shouting: "Get busy, you . . ."

A veritable whirlwind of black arms and legs rushed towards me, and stopping a terrific swing with the side of my head and all the rest of him with my stomach I was hurled into the lee scuppers amidst roars of laughter. But that did me a lot of good. I got up seething with rage but a great deal wiser. I noticed that he rushed with the roll of the ship and so I could tell when he was coming. He rushed again but I kept cool and side-stepped, and although my mighty swipe missed his head by several inches, he went by and hit the rail a terrific bang and shook himself up considerably. Honours were about easy now, and I settled down to see how I could hit him when he rushed. His rushes were not so full of steam now; and I found the best thing to do was to risk a whack or two and go right in between his arms and hammer away at his stomach while he was waving his arms about behind my back in an effort to regain his balance. I discovered in-fighting, in fact, and with my chest against his I soaked in every ounce I could raise with both hands. A roar of applause let me know that my tactics were approved by the crew and from that moment I had won that fight. A little later as we broke away he sunk to his knees gasping and his eyes

were rolling wildly. When he staggered to his feet he went clean crazy, and seeing all red he dashed at me, showing his teeth and hitting out with both arms and feet. I stopped his top part all right, but his legs came on and swept me off my feet, and we rolled in a mad scratching embrace with terrific force against the rail. Neither of us could get on our feet for a bit, but I was up first, and I realised with a sob that there was no more fight left in me. When he got up he fell drunkenly against me with his chin up in the air ready for me to hit. But I couldn't find the power and I just shoved him gently off, and he sunk to the deck with a groan. He could not get up and he mumbled that he had had quite enough. Cherry rushed across the deck and said :

" Is it over ? "

" Yes," I gasped. " He says he's had enough."

" *HE* says he's had enough, does he ? Well, now's the time to kick his block off."

Cherry could not understand this theory of the beaten man calling time, but I was too utterly weary to argue. Bruno and Feltham took me aft and cleaned me up a bit and shoved me into my bunk, and they were very pleased with my win. I was just falling off to sleep when the skipper's voice at our door said :

" Here."

I thought it meant trouble, but when Bruno went out, the dear old sportsman, without saying a word, gave him a full bottle of rum. We discovered later that he and the two mates had



watched the fight from the binnacle bridge, between the boats, and when it was over the skipper said I showed every promise of becoming a very good mate.

Next day I was covered with bruises and cuts and was so stiff that I could hardly walk along the deck, but Maurice had no visible signs of damage, except a bandaged wrist and a slightly thicker lower lip, which was thick enough to begin with anyway. He came up and shook my hand very heartily and said:

"You's a good boy. I done think I beat you easy."

"Perhaps you will next time."

"Go way, dere ain't goin' to be no necks time. Me an' you's good frens for keeps."

The apprentices had a little dust-up with the skipper on this trip. All apprentices complain of a shortage of food, and it was in an attempt illicitly to increase supplies that we got into trouble. One night we arranged a very ambitious raid, for we knew that owing to painting the lazarette door was open. Bruno was to creep through the cabin and down into the store, I was to hang around the top, and if the skipper *did* come out I was just seeing the time by the cabin clock, Plasmon was to stay in the sail-locker and take the stuff as it came along, while Feltham would sit on the deck door-combing to look out for the mate.

Bruno and I crept stealthily across the saloon and I saw him get down below, and knowing that it would take him some time to find the

good things (we had previously pinched a tin of baked beans for jam) I went back near the clock, waiting for Bruno's soft whistle. And just as I got there the skipper came out of his cabin. There was no time to warn Bruno, so saying aloud, "Twenty past two," I walked calmly back along the passage, thinking how cleverly I had diddled the skipper, and hoping Bruno would not whistle before the old man went on deck. Plasmon went up on to the poop with an invented piece of news for the mate, but really to see if the skipper was up there. He came back in about five minutes to say the skipper had not been on deck at all. A few moments later Bruno crept in like a man who had seen a ghost. We explained our side of it, and then Bruno said :

" I had no idea anything was wrong, and after a minute or so I found a lovely ham and I crept back to the hatch and whistled softly and then pushed the ham up, and it was very quietly taken from me. Then I found some *strawberry* jam, mind you, and some butter, a tin of the old man's party biscuits, and then some sardines, and I passed 'em all up, and then I could only find haricot beans and junk like that, so I decided to come up. Anyway, it wasn't a bad haul, and perhaps if we took more it would be noticed. *Noticed!* As I climbed up through the hatch a pair of hands closed round my throat, and just as I was going to say to *you* : ' Don't be a silly ass,' the skipper's voice said : ' So I've caught you at last, eh ? ' I said, ' No, sir, you've

caught me at first, I've never done it before ! ' He shook me up then and said, ' Now don't tell lies. Didn't you take the jam off the Horn, and the pickles outside 'Frisco, and the haricots off Flint Island, and the currants off Tasmania, and the tinned beef off New Zealand, and lots more besides . . . *didn't you ?* ' "

We were aghast at this accurate record.

Next morning the captain called us all into his cabin, and after a very hot lecture sent us down below to trim up the lazarette, and told us that he was going to report us to the owners as a lot of thieves. Only the next day Plasmon swiped a dried stock fish from the steward's basket and slipped it up inside his jersey. Just as he had done it the second mate shouted for him. Plasmon ran gaily up the poop ladder happy in the knowledge that he was now establishing an alibi. The second started to give him some orders, and then suddenly stopped, with his eye fixed on Plasmon's neck, where the tell-tale tail of the fish could just be seen. Reaching over and pulling out the fish, the second belted poor Plasmon over the head with it and chased him off the poop, shouting out as Plasmon dived into our cabin : " I'll give it to the captain myself."

At dinner-time the cook staggered us by saying that nothing had been put out for us, and we knew too much to go and tackle the steward about it. About an hour later the skipper sauntered casually into our cabin, smoking a big cigar, and started talking about when he

first went to sea what a hell of a time the apprentices got until they proved themselves good sailors, but that nowadays captains were too lenient and underworked and *overfed* the boys. He made us all feel very foolish and angry, too, and at last Feltham, who had not figured personally in any of the recent trouble, volunteered that, if that was so, the *Spindrift* must be about fifty years behind the times, since we had got no dinner at all.

"What!" said the skipper, assuming astonishment. "No dinner! What happened to all that stuff missing from the lazarette then? I thought you had it, and I told the steward not to waste any food."

Three days later we were very hungry and penitent boys, but soon recovered when the captain sent us in a tin of cherries, and we learnt that he had ordered the cook to give us fresh bread four times a week instead of the usual three. And he told us that he would forget to write to the owners.

We had an otherwise uneventful passage, but the best sailing trip of the lot. Running down into a strong gale that lasted right across, we often did over three hundred knots a day. We dropped anchor in Valparaiso on July 30, 1905, after a passage of twenty-eight days for the 7,200 miles, just one day outside the record, and Black Peter swore that we would have beaten the record easily if only the old man had kept him longer at the wheel.

Soon after we arrived an imposing squad of



officials came aboard to interview Maurice, and he went off with them. Cherry said he was the whitest nigger alive, and we wanted to know why. He was a good enough chap but nothing outstanding. Cherry said :

“ Well, he never let on to anybody about that hundred pounds, and he’s got himself into a pile of trouble without trying to bring anybody else into it.”

That was so. Maurice had never hinted who had taken his money, but most of us put that down to sheer common sense while he was still aboard, and we were willing to bet that the next few hours would see some developments. We were wrong. Maurice was assisted to San Francisco, and he went off without saying a word to incriminate anybody.

Owing to the Newcastle coal strike and the spurt made to make up arrears directly it was over, some forty sailing ships were sent away to the West Coast within fourteen days, and we found ourselves in Valparaiso with about twenty of our Newcastle neighbours. This seventy thousand tons of coal in a lump much disorganised the unloading arrangements ; as a result each ship was daily getting overside only sixty or seventy tons, often no lighters at all were available for a few days, and then every little while a “ Norther ” would take a hand in preventing work.

Valparaiso harbour is just an irregular dent in the coast, entirely unprotected from the northward, and exceptionally violent though



often brief storms, locally called "Northerers," often do a deal of damage to shipping and the water-front.

Like the "Pamperos" off Brazil, the "Southerly Busters" off Sydney and also the "Nor'-Wester" in the Bay of Bengal, these storms get up very quickly—from a calm to a hurricane in a few minutes is not uncommon; they pull mountainous seas along with them, and many a ship has taken more water aboard moored fore and aft in Valparaiso than in the heaviest of mid-ocean rollers.

The *Steinbek*, a three-masted German barque, broke adrift one evening and was only caught by two powerful tugs a few feet from the Marina. Indeed she was so close that her rudder and stern-post were damaged on the beach. It took nearly nine hours to tow her three miles across the harbour towards the lee of the hill capped by the Naval School, and then, at daylight, a sudden angry burst of wind parted the towing hawsers and she drifted down and sunk the dry-dock that would have been used to lift her for repairs.

It was a fine piece of seamanship that led the captain to drop his spare anchor as he passed over the sinking dry-dock, for he got what he called "good holding ground" and saved his ship. Divers repaired the dry-dock; it was pumped out and floated before we left, and the *Steinbek's* skipper was solemnly taken aboard to enable a few very excited officials of the Port Authority to point out to him a number of

places where his anchor had *failed* to find "good holding ground" before it jammed itself, good and solid, into the after twin-bulkheads.

One of these "Northers" came as a blessing to us. A lighter loaded up to top-heaviness with cases of beer, tinned provisions and other delicacies that we had read about but not seen for many months, was making ashore from a "Kosmos" liner. The rising sea scared the "lancheros" and they started to heave cases overboard when right abreast of us. The mate watched this performance for some time and then shouted:

"Boys, come on here and jump lively, *strip* and man that gig, that's all jettison or flotsam and jetsam, and whoever gets it can hang on to it."

We knew no more than the mate did about marine law, but we did know what was in those cases. As we went over the side we saw the gig of the *Daylight* fill up with naked forms and drop astern. As we passed the poop the second mate hove a line, shouting to me in the bow of the gig, "Make fast to the fore thwart, we'll haul you back; you chaps *keep both hands free*."

We pulled case after case from the water until the gig was loaded down to the gunwale, and then those on deck pulled us up alongside; we made three trips while the *Daylight* crowd, who relied on their oars, made one, and by that time there were any number of boats scouring around. The *Daylight* apprentices told us later that they knew we were *professional* robbers.

We got such a lot, that even under what the skipper called a fair distribution "according to rank" we apprentices were well provided with beer and tinned provisions for a month. One small case was put aside, for when opened it proved to contain twenty-four daintily shaped bottles labelled in Spanish. No one could understand anything on the labels except the words "Costa Rica," which might be the name of the stuff or only its place of origin. The mate said that judging by the colour, a dark green, it must be hair-oil. The skipper finally threw it in with our lot and in due course we tasted it, without getting any farther as to what it was. Whenever we had visitors we used gravely to pass this stuff around as "liqueur"; and it was finished without any tragedy and without anybody knowing whether it was liqueur, perfume or hair-oil.

To help pass the time a regatta was organised by the captains, the *Daylight*, the biggest vessel in port, being made the flag-ship, where the guests were entertained and the prizes given away. The events were—a whaler's race for apprentices; a life-boat race for A.B.'s.; an open swimming race; a comic event, a race in the side-scrubbing punts, the crew using coaling shovels; a climbing race up and down the rigging of the *Daylight*, whose fore, main and mizzen masts were all the same height.

We practised daily for the whaler race, and kidding ourselves we had a good chance we turned the boat upside down on the morning

of the race and polished the bottom with graphite. We were outclassed in the race, which the *Daylight* boys ran away with, much to the delight of their skipper. They finished the two miles at least one hundred yards ahead of the *Imberhorne* and the *Kinross-shire* almost level, and some fifty yards ahead of us. In the life-boat race most of the boats got water-logged and the Frenchmen from the *Marguerite* won easily, due, so our mate said, to "their skipper being such a damn fool that he sprung a leak in the water tank coming out and had to use his boats to store water in, and so got 'em water-tight."

I managed to win the three hundred yards' swimming race by ten yards from the second mate of the *Shenandoah*, the sister ship to the famous wooden clipper *Roanoke*, and this was our only success. The first prize was a clock alleged to be worth a hundred pesos; it was sold that night for twenty only.

The punt event was most amusing. Our punt was sunk almost at once, the bos'un putting such energy into the end of his stroke that he shovelled the punt full of water. The *Marguerite* was again victorious, an event that proved that our mate had a "down" on the French, for he sneered, "So they ought to win, ain't they trained in those things for the French navy?"

A *Daylight* man again rejoiced their skipper's heart by winning the up-and-down race, although it took a lot of talk and later a lot of men to convince our bos'un that he was legitimately



disqualified. He was up to the main truck as soon as the winner was at the fore, but to everybody's astonishment on the way down he clambered along the cross-trees, leapt out to the royal back-stay and shot down to deck like a comet. He said the skipper told him "Touch the truck and get down again as fast as you can"—"Yes! down the *rigging*"—"Well," he replied, "what do yer call the back-stays? DECKWORK?"

In the middle of the prize-giving there was a great commotion, and it turned out to be Cherry offering to run the winner up and down again or "knock 'is ruddy 'ead off," whichever he liked.

As a result of my win I received a challenge from a Martinique negro, cook's mate on the *Shenandoah*, to swim from his ship to ours, about five hundred yards, for seventy-five dollars a side. I took this along to the captain, who offered to put up the money *if I won*. He explained that if I did win he would give me the whole hundred and fifty, because he would have a good bet on the race, but if I lost he would deduct the seventy-five from my pay, as he would lose his bet. I took this little problem to the half-deck, and following my story the boys offered to share whether I won or lost. So on the Sunday morning we dived off a painting-stage on the *Shenandoah*.

Darky shot ahead, using a powerful crawl, and I thought to myself—if he keeps that up, our money is well up the spout. There was a



fair swell running and I settled down to forget Darky and swim a steady stroke. At about two hundred yards I heard a splashing and there was my opponent alongside, eyes rolling and arms pounding the water ineffectually. He had swum himself to a standstill, and I went on to win easily.

Next week he challenged me over one hundred yards for double stakes, but as every penny of the winnings had gone and I knew he could beat me easily over the shorter distance, I countered with an offer for one thousand dollars over a mile.

On the Monday the captain duly paid over the money, remarking that I was some good after all, for he had won a cool thousand off the skipper of the *Shenandoah*, who was going to *soak* that nigger for not choosing his own distance. We pulled him ashore in the gig at six o'clock and his orders were:

"Go aboard now and come back for me at eleven."

*Go aboard!* What! with one hundred and fifty dollars? Yes! we didn't think! We pulled round the dry-dock and fifteen minutes later tied the gig to the mole and proceeded to have a right royal time ashore. When we got back a few minutes before eleven there was no sign of the gig.

Feltham said, "Great guns! this *is* a go."

A few "oombrees" lounging around the mole swore that they had not seen it, and we were still wondering how to face the "old man"—

the gig's whereabouts did not really worry us much—when he arrived.

"What are you all standing around here for? Lost something? Get that gig alongside at once, and one of you always stay in the boat in future or somebody will steal the oars and rowlocks."

Bruno did not improve matters any by saying smartly, "Aye aye, sir," and then standing stock still. The skipper must have suspected something, for looking round, he said:

"Where the hell *is* that gig?"

Finding myself propelled right up to the captain, I accepted the inevitable and became spokesman.

"It's gone, sir."

"*Gone!* I'll give you 'gone.' What do you mean, it's gone? Has it rowed itself back to the ship? When did it go, anyway?"

This was a poser and I could see myself being properly up a stump very soon, but I said:

"Just now, sir."

"Well, did you see it go?"

"No, sir."

"How long have you been here? Did you come ashore in it?"

"Yes, sir."

"When?"

"Just now, sir."

His face was getting redder and redder, his eyes bulging out and suppressed anger likely to burst him, when he suddenly reached for me and I just as suddenly backed astern, falling

over Bruno's feet, and the skipper caught his collar instead. Pulling Bruno's face very close to his own and giving a good shake every time he said "Eh?" the captain bellowed:

"You rapsallions. Disobeying my orders and rampaging ashore since six, eh? Spent all your money, eh? Broken your agreements, eh?<sup>1</sup> Lost the ship's gig, eh? Told a hell of a lot of lies to the captain, eh? Made a fool of him, eh? Nice specimens of 'sons of English gentlemen,' eh? More like sons of bitches, eh? Nice report to the owners, eh? Confess now, go on, confess before I break you in half, all of you."

Bruno said he thought that was "about right."

"*About right!*" the captain fairly shrieked, "about right! Yes, and it's about right that you'll not come ashore again if we don't get home for twenty years. And if that gig isn't found before to-morrow morning, I'll put the police after you, mind that."

He threw Bruno from him and stamped off and took a waterman's boat off to the ship, turning round every few seconds to shake his fist at us. We sat there and talked it over, and Feltham summed it all up by saying—

<sup>1</sup> The skipper referred to a clause in the Apprenticeship Agreement which described the apprentice as the son of an English gentleman, and also insisted upon behaviour worthy of such ancestry in the avoidance of public-houses, wine-shops, and even more unsavoury places.

"This would be topping if we hadn't blewed all the cash."

About 4 a.m. we observed a boat push out from the dry-dock towing something uncommonly like our gig, and we watched spellbound as the three young Scotch engineers from the dry-dock pulled quietly to the mole, tied up our gig just where we had left it, and as quietly rowed back to the dock. We examined the gig and found everything was there and not a thing even disturbed, but on the backboard was pinned a post-card on which was written :

#### WE BACKED THE NIGGER.

"Come on," cried Bruno, "let's go and pull their noses, the dirty Scotch tykes. Mac owes me some money too."

As we approached the dock a few well-aimed lumps of coal indicated that our "enemies" expected us, their ranging was too accurate to be comfortable, and when Bruno, who was steering, stopped a big piece with his eye, we decided to haul off a bit and plan a campaign. Mac's voice rung out: "What's the matter now, can't you find your ship?" Bruno yelled back, "Never mind our ship, you wait till we find you."

We pulled round the dock twice, at times making a rush to try and board it, but the fusillade was altogether too much, and it wasn't doing the gig a lot of good either. Finally, terms of peace were bellowed across the water. Mac, Patterson and "Boskie" Brodie were to let us

board the dock, and they would then feed us and help to clean up the gig, and we were not to tell the skipper the true story of the gig's disappearance. At eight o'clock, pretty well lushed up with Mac's whisky, "tincture straight from bonny Scotland" he called it, we got back to the ship.

The captain must have heard the boat come alongside, for he was on deck to welcome us. We more than kept the peace terms by explaining that "the ring I *thought* I tied the painter to was really a loose horseshoe, and the gig floated it away, but *fortunately* the Scotch engineers saw it and came out and saved it."

The captain's face was a study during this explanation, but it was nothing to compare with ours when he turned to the mate and said, "Wonderful liars, aren't they? Good boys those engineers, though. Give 'em a pound each, and I'll stop it out of the pay of these young *gentlemen*." The old devil nearly injured himself with the emphasis he put on the last word.



## CHAPTER XIV

### A MOUNTAIN TRIP

ONE Monday was a public holiday for some religious festival, and on the previous Friday the captain told us that the Boss of the Ship-Chandlers had invited us, with him, to spend the week-end at his house, which was some four thousand feet above sea-level, on the second ridge north-west of Santiago. We were to make a mountaineering expedition of it and go up on the Saturday and return on the Monday. This was a great treat and a great honour also, for the skipper seldom "fraternises" with any of the ship's company.

We started off at sunrise and outside the chandler's shop we found two guides, one of whom could speak very fair English, and two pack-mules loaded with all that we should require on the trip. The skipper told us to take it in turn to "steer" the mules until we got clear of the town, where he said the scenery was wonderful, and the paths so narrow that the mules could not get away.

About two thousand feet up we came to the ruins of a small circular stone tower, where we had lunch. From here we could see the Pacific Ocean to the south-west of rugged Cape Curuanilla, and northward the semicircular bay was spread out in a glorious panorama at our feet. The town nestling on the steep hill-side made a beautiful picture, and away to the right we could see Vina-del-Mar, and behind this rose mighty Acon-

cagua, its snowy head reaching up and through the fleecy clouds.

The guide told us that the tower was originally built to shelter those signalling the arrival of ships in the early days when the arrival of a ship was a great event, but later the occupants were murdered by some Indians. It was destroyed in one of the many civil wars by a crowd of soldiers who had encamped there and were terrified during the night by frequent ghostly visitations of the murdered signallers; there were few Chileños even to-day who would dare be there at night-time. The guides would not be there after dark for all Potosi.

As we marched slowly up, through magnificent gorges or along the edges of plumb precipices, the captain told us bits of his life and experiences. His father and his father's father were fishermen off the Great Banks, and he, the captain, first went to sea when he was only five years of age. Before he was ten he knew more about handling a vessel, especially in heavy weather or making land, than all the examiners that ever lived, so he said, anyway. He had been fifty years at sea and had never put a foot on a steam vessel, not even a tug, and he said that he did not mean to, not even if he got wrecked and it was the only way of being saved.

"Have you ever been wrecked, Captain?"

"Yes, more than once, but never when in command. When I was a boy I was before the mast on an emigrant ship, the *Southern Cross*, out to New Zealand. She was an old wooden

craft, and a very good sea boat, and her 'tween-decks was all built up with cabins and reserved for the emigrants who were usually herded down below and battened down for days when there was any heavy weather. She was only half the size of the *Spindrift* and we had three hundred and fifty emigrants aboard, so that you can guess that they did not have a very comfortable passage. We had sighted the coast of the South Island and every one was on deck talking enthusiastically about getting to their new homes when it started to blow from the south ; very shortly we were hove-to in a full gale, and a few hours later we were blown ashore on to great angry rocks that sent the breakers swirling about in a way that held small promise of escape for anybody that tried to get ashore.

"The lifelessness of the ship and the extraordinary shivering and trembling as she sank down to be violently stopped by the rocks made me seasick for the first time. Still there was no time to be sick and all hands turned out to try and get some of the boats away, while the officers stood around with revolvers to prevent a rush swamping any boat that did get safely down. The first boat was smashed to pieces before it left the falls, and then the emigrants got out of hand and started to sling over the side hen-coops and everything that they could lift, and lots of them jumped over and clung on to these. The mates shot two or three men in trying to stop the panic, but the captain told them to let them go, as there would not be

room for all in the boats even if we could get them safely down. Then a huge greybeard lifted the ship up and flung her down on the rocks, a great splintering of the main deck abaft the galley showed that she had broken in half, and immediately after that great seas pounded aboard and pretty nearly everybody was washed overboard. I climbed up to the main yard, then slid down the stay on to the top of the deck-house and collared a bucket rack, threw out the dozen buckets and shoved the rack over the side. Watching for a big breaker, I leapt in and was washed clear of the rocks the ship was held on, and swimming to the rack hung on to get a breather and see what was next to be done. The water was not very cold, the land was only about a quarter of a mile away, and the difficulty was not getting ashore, but to steer that rack so that I wouldn't go ashore on to some more rocks.

"While on the rack I took off my sea-boots and my coat to enable me to swim more rapidly, but I had the sense to tie them on to the rack. About a hundred yards from the shore I waited for a breaker, and getting up on the bend of the crest I surf-swum ashore and was washed right up the beach, high and dry. A few minutes later I saw my rack coming ashore and waited until I could get my boots and coat; then I walked along the beach to see who else had been saved.

"A crowd of yammering men were round the second mate and two or three of the crew, demand-



ing that somebody be sent into Dunedin, about eight miles to the northward of us, to get assistance, and the second mate sent me, with three of the sailors and two emigrants. It took us four hours to cover the distance, but when we got there it was better than a sermon to see the way people turned out to help, and we were very soon coming back with lots of blankets and food in carts and traps provided and driven by their owners. When we got back the ship had broken completely in half, huge seas were breaking over them, and the two halves were dissolving just as a piece of sugar dissolves in a teaspoon.

"The captain, more than half of the crew and about two hundred emigrants were lost, and later an enquiry was held because some of the emigrants had started the infamous lie that the ship had been thrown away for the insurance money. A number of us were served with notices to attend the Court, but every man jack got scared, the very word Court was too much for us, and although we were to get five shillings a day, nearly as much as a captain got in those days, not one stopped for the enquiry. I got away with another boy—he is captain of the *Roanoke* now—on a small schooner to Sydney, and I was back home in Nova Scotia before that enquiry was finished.

"Those emigrant ships were very different to the *Spindrift*. They were run much more on naval lines for discipline, and there were fire-drills, boat-drills, inspections and all that sort of thing."



All unused to anything like mountaineering we began to feel the drag of the long climb and short rests became increasingly frequent. At every pause we would ask the guide how much farther we had to go, and each time he would reply that it was only a few feet. Every half-hour brought us the maddening news: "Señores, it is only a few feet." At last we breasted a ridge from where the house could be seen, about a mile ahead and a little below us, and then the guide said: "Finish, it is ze top," and we then realised that he had been answering our enquiry concerning the distance with information about the altitude.

We were heartily welcomed by the ship-chandler and his entire family, and a hot bath and a huge meal very soon dispelled all weariness. One of his daughters was a typical Spanish beauty, but unfortunately could not speak a word of English, and even, so Plasmon told us later, did not understand the language of the eyes, since every time he looked across the table at her, with love, admiration and fidelity eternal sticking out of his eyes like hat-pegs, she just passed him the quince jam. It is at such times as this that one realises the great barrier of language.

Our host told us that the fine house once belonged to the President of the Republic and that he had bought it three years before, getting it fairly cheaply because it was likely to get isolated as the new Trans-Andean railway collected townships along its route. Before going

to sleep that night I composed a letter to my father pointing out the manifold advantages of the ship-chandlery business and asking him to buy me one.

When we were packed up ready for the downward trip, our host told the guide to take us back by another road, which he said was a little longer—but it crossed the railway in two places, and if we did feel it too much we were sure to get a lift. He advised us to fill the toes of our socks and boots with vaseline which he provided, as the long walk down was much more trying to the feet than the climb up. This did not seem reasonable to us at the time, but we soon found out he was right. In climbing upward the boot is firmly planted before the weight of the body is applied, but in going down a declivity not quite steep enough to justify backward climbing, the boot hits the ground with a shock and suddenly resists the whole weight and momentum of the body, the foot weariness that comes giving the weird and very painful impression that the toes have gone out and ahead of the boot and are taking the shock.

We stopped for lunch near the ruins of a big rambling old place, which, like every ruin about, was said to be haunted. The guide told us that it was an old convent that had caused a great scandal many years ago. The people were not really Catholics but some devil-possessioned heretics who used a lot of the Catholic customs as a blind while, in fact, the entire community was indulging in every form of vice. In one

of the civil wars a company of soldiers had reached this place at nightfall and had asked for shelter, but were refused by the terrified occupants, who feared discovery of the real nature of the place. The soldiers naturally forthwith assumed the place was in favour of the rebels, and having forced an entrance found a cellar full of skulls, the skulls of infants a few days old. Underground passages ran like a rabbit warren and connected all the buildings, and nearly every woman in the place was with child. The enraged soldiers, all devout Catholics, set the place on fire and threw most of the inmates into the flames, while a priest with them cursed the spot for ever and said that the last day would find that spot barren, and that anybody that went inside the walls would also be accursed.

The guides said a few men, and women, had ignored that holy man's words and all had met with a sudden and violent end. On one occasion a protestant missionary party had stopped there, and hearing the story connected with the place had said it was all the result of the accursed bigotry of the Scarlet Woman, which dragged its slimy trail of corruption across the intellect of man like a slug across a cabbage, or words to that effect, and pushing aside the protesting guides had gone in and thoroughly explored the place. From a clear blue sky had come a flash of lightning and every member of that party was struck dead amidst the ruins of the chapel. Every corpse was left in the same attitude, with

one hand in the act of making the sign of the Cross and the other pointing directly at the small knoll upon which the priest was standing when he "ordered" the curse.

The captain remarked that he would bet "that fool of a bos'un" would be inside quick enough if he was up there. Usually we would not dare to talk to him about anyone else in the ship's company, but Bruno took this opening and asked him what he really thought of Cherry. He said :

"He is the finest sailorman and the biggest scoundrel I've ever had aboard a ship. On deck or aloft he is grand and anywhere else he is just a lunatic. I have never seen or heard of better work than when he climbed out and rigged that topsail lift, but with the two pounds I gave him for doing it he got blind drunk and tried to fight two ships' companies single-handed."

We had ample time, and after clearing up the gear we sat around and talked and the old guide told us about earthquakes and their effects, pointing out several breaks in the strata of the hill-sides where landslips had occurred which were due to the great earthquake of 1822, when the surface for thousands of square miles about Valparaiso had been permanently raised up more than a metre. He pulled out a lot of papers from his satchel, and carefully selecting one, he passed this to the captain, who read aloud :

"A SOLE SURVIVOR, BY THE GRACE OF GOD.

"One evening about thirty years ago it was



calm and peaceful as we sat outside our little house watching the great red sun casting fairy pathways across the western sky as it sunk majestically to rest. My mother was telling little Carlos of the wonderful mercy of the good God, and when the Angelus bell pealed forth from our tiny chapel she showed him, for the first time, how to make the Sign of the Cross.

"We sat there talking until darkness crept over the great hills behind us and the mountain chill whispered its 'good night,' and then we suddenly heard a distant rumbling and the air seemed to quiver. Hot blasts of air began to puff past us and we cast anxious glances towards the mighty Misti, for there were amongst us a few who had witnessed and many times told us of the terrible visitation of Valparaiso some half-century before. The wind increased and gust after gust, like the breathing of some giant, swept along the ravines and whistled over the hill-tops, and then suddenly the tempest burst upon us.

"No words can describe those terrible and constant explosions of lightning, and the peals of thunder crashed about us without ceasing and eyes and ears were tormented. The earth shook and groaned and opened up wide beneath us, rocks were split and swallowed up in yawning chasms or scattered like hail before the rushing wind. The wind roared to a gale and then shrieked up to a hurricane, and every now and then a hurricane squall blew in the hurricane. Cattle were blown from their feet and dashed to death at



the bottom of the precipices, or thrown into the air and scattered like feathers; gigantic trees were uprooted and tossed high in the air or swept through the ruins of our little village like giants' battering rams, rending and crashing and utterly destroying our work of many years.

"Buildings and walls were torn down and beaten flat, or crushed to powder by the rocks that had broken loose from the mountains and thundered through the village, a very bombardment by Angry Nature. Men and women and little children were hurled into the air and dashed into mangled fragments against the ground or thrown into belching chasms that closed and crushed them into oblivion. Flames burst from the rocks as they were shaken from their century-old beds and great hot torrents swept down the hill-sides and searched the debris for the living and maimed, but their cries as they were boiled, burned and crushed into Eternity were drowned in the terrible uproar of the elements.

"Then as if The Master had lifted his hand the wind ceased and the earth was still, and then with one stupendous crash the heavens opened and emptied themselves. Two hours later it was calm and peaceful, and the gentle breeze sighed as if Nature was weary after its terrible labours, and I crept out, offering thanks to the All-Merciful God Who had saved his sinful servant from the very doors of Hell. I shuddered and was sick as I saw that the tortuous crack in the rocks into which I had fallen had

closed except for the few feet where I lay cowering and praying.

"My beloved parents, my brothers and sisters, my friends, yea, the little village itself to the last particle had disappeared and left no trace, but as I wended my solitary way, heart-broken, terrified and weary, down the twisted and tortured path, in every crevasse and at every turn I found bruised, battered and scattered remains of all that a man holds dear, and later the terrible thought that I alone had been preserved sent me mad, and I was found, by some friendly rescuers hurrying up the hills, wandering, naked and demented yet shrieking my thanks to God."

The guide listened to the reading as if he had never heard it before and every little while he ejaculated a comment, and when the captain had finished he told us it was a translation of his statement of the great earthquake in the Arequipa district in 1868. This statement was made before a Commission of Enquiry, and he always carried about with him translations in every known language so that he could tell the story to any of his patrons, who even to this day were so moved by his sufferings that they gave him a present of money. We did.

The captain remarked that it must indeed have been a terrible experience, the feeling of helplessness and yet the "impudence" of hoping to be saved would unnerve any man, and then the end of the turmoil and the paralyzing discovery that everyone and everything

except oneself had been hurled into oblivion. The curious part was that he had seen this document all up the West Coast and had been shown it by all sorts of men, including a young German who, he afterwards found out, had been sacked from a shipping office. This man claimed it was his experience in St. Pierre, to where his family had emigrated some years before.

CHAPTER XV  
THE CAPTAIN

“**F**EAR is like the smallpox,” the captain said, “and if it isn’t nipped in the bud it will run away with the strongest. There may be men who have always been strong enough to beat down rising fear, but once fear has asserted itself it rules the roost with an iron hand. There is a story of a colonel riding with a fresh young subaltern through the passes on the Indian frontier, and the subaltern said to the colonel: ‘Why, sir, I believe you are afraid,’ and the answer was: ‘So I am, and if you were only half as afraid as I am you would run away.’ That colonel knew that the brave man is not the one who does not know fear but the man who has the capacity to beat fear when it raises its ugly head.

“Some years ago I had an experience and I was like that subaltern, for I ran away. It happened in Ireland, which was then seething with discontent and outrages, and like most foreigners I had an idea that the Irishman was just a little below the worst savage. I was walking down the south side of Bray Head when some shouting behind me attracted my attention, and on looking round I saw a huge bloodhound making towards me and a few yards behind him were three men waving their arms and shouting. Now I did not know the first thing about a bloodhound and its nature, but from books like the *Hound of the Baskervilles*

I had the firmly rooted conviction that it would be only a moment's work for that brute to tear me limb from limb and scatter me about the hill-side.

"And I knew from the English papers that *any* Irishman would set a bloodhound on a man as soon as he would shoot a landlord. It is a fairly bleak place and had there been any wood I should not have had time to cut a stick, so I started to run, and to make matters worse directly I started the shouting behind increased. It was steep and I soon had a rattling pace on, but although I was beating the men, a glance round every now and then saw that great hound surely catching me up. And then Mr. Fear took charge completely.

"I ran like a demented man, shouting and hoping to attract attention, and as I ran all the horrors to come flitted through my mind. I felt those cruel jaws close round my throat, I felt the worrying and the brute's hot breath beating into my face as it shook the life out of me. I felt it all just as if it happened, perhaps a little more so. Three miles ahead of me was a tiny little hamlet called Greystones, and my only hope was to reach a door. Any door would do, but O God! help me to some door that I could slam in this beast's face. Phew! he was only twenty yards behind me now, and then in trying to jump a small brook I fell flat on my face, and before I could scramble up, the warm breath of that monster of death was beating round my neck. Now those teeth would close



and crashing through my spine would tear the life out of me. What a fool I was to leave my ship loading comfortable stuff like Guinness's stout and come fooling down here in this barbarous country where men set brutes like this on to innocent passers-by !

"Nothing happened, and shoving Mr. Fear aside I turned over and there was the bloodhound sniffing my feet ; when he saw me looking at him he trotted up and licked my face. By the time the men came up to us I was sitting on the ground with my arm round the dog's neck telling him what a good dog he was. Explanations followed from three of the finest men I have ever had the good fortune to meet, and to one of whom I often write even now. Their shouting was to ask me not to move, as they had been training this hound for only a few days, and his great fault was that he was so playfully inquisitive that any movement would attract his attention and he would leave his job and gambol off to see what this new mystery was.

"Now if that had been a man, even a whooping Red Indian, I would have stood my ground. Mr. Fear got in through my lack of knowledge of bloodhounds and also through the lies I had read and believed about Irishmen."

When we arose to proceed on the journey, five howls of anguish revealed five cases of footsore, and as we limped about commiserating with each other, it seemed impossible that we should ever make the fifteen miles to Baron,

where we would be able to get a ferry. As we cringed on, however, that blessed vaseline started to work with the increasing warmth of our feet, and after a mile or so we were stepping out without inconvenience.

We passed some more ruins and the guide started in to tell us the history, but the captain interrupted impatiently :

“ Yes, yes. We know all about it. It is haunted and accursed and thousands of heretics and infidels have been slain, and nobody dare go near it after nightfall, and it is a great pity that anybody dares to talk about it at any time. It is a pity that earthquake of yours did not ‘hurl to oblivion, all battered and scattered,’ this religion.”

I thought this outburst was simply the result of bad temper caused by sore feet, but ever since I had heard the captain’s astonishing outbursts when we met a head wind I had been curious to learn his views on religion, and so I said :

“ Which religion, sir ? ”

“ All of it,” he snorted in a way that showed we were on a subject that would make him talk. It did, and he delivered himself of something like the following, at times throwing in a snort or a gesture of contempt of such intensity that it was obvious that, however foolish and ignorant his ideas might be considered, they were very real to him.

“ Your religion as well ? ”

“ I have not got one. Somewhere, every-

where, some time and all time a Master must have made the universe and everything in it. That is all I believe, and that is not a religion. I certainly do not believe that there is another master, call him Satan, Shaitan or Devil as you will, so powerful and universal as to worry the first Master and dish all his plans. Men call that first one God and I will call him God, and to my mind, inexplicable and mad as it may seem, from that same God flows every influence, good, bad and indifferent. That belief makes me a heretic from every established religion on the face of the earth.

“I simply cannot conceive God on one side spinning out all the good while the Devil sits the other side spinning out all evil until the world is like a piece of cloth, the weft being God and the warp the Devil. You will understand that I mean only the god that mankind has put up, I know nothing of the real God.

“Man has erected a god and given him all sorts of powers and qualities ; and that god, judged by his fruits, is a failure, for even if there is this powerful devil and he is solely responsible for all evil, if that god is omniscient he must *permit* the devil to run the show. For it is the Devil that runs the mind of man, despite the claim of the churches ; and the actions prompted by greed, lust, cruelty and selfishness and other ‘works of the devil’ are as a thousand to one against the actions prompted by brotherly love and other manifestations of an all-good god.

“A century ago the Kanaka knew nothing of

Christianity, and then according to the Church their god set out to salvage him, and now the Kanaka has a smattering of a creed. But as usual this devil comes along and the Kanaka has more than a smattering of evil. His race is become a corruption, syphilitic, dishonest, drunkard and decaying.

"You say this sort of thing to the ordinary run of sky-pilot and he will roll his eyes and look as if he is feeling sick and say 'Judge not lest ye be judged,' but I will reply that we were warned that by their fruits we should know them, and if that means anything, it means that we are equipped with the power to assess the merit of a faith by the behaviour of its adherents. And if we have not that power, what the hell is this parson doing trying to convince others?

"I have never grasped upon what particular grounds man came to assume that he amounted to more than the other animals, or even the vegetables. Because he invents a new method of preventing birth, or a swifter elevator or a steam engine, he has assumed that he is above all other creation; at the same time he shouts from every house-top that material things are dross and only morality counts in the eyes of his god. There is absolutely no evidence beyond man's own assumption, as far as I can see. You take the germ of consumption; we have no evidence that it ever deflects one inch from the path set for it by the will of man's god. Can man claim the same?

"It all appears to me to be a matter of balance.



A bos'un is washed overboard and a few humans are sorrowful, but a lot of crabs sit back and solemnly thank their Creator for a good meal, and a few weeks later the bos'un's widow, turned religious by the sad death of her husband, is teaching her little girl to thank the same Creator for her tea which consists of crab salad, the same crabs that ate up her husband."

"What an awful idea !"

"Yes, you don't like it, but that does not alter the facts. Man thanks his god for his meals, though the meal may consist of a poor little calf, cruelly bled to a slow death. To me it is not only reasonable but almost sublime to contemplate the smallpox bacteria saying their grace as they devour the living particles of a human body. And when they tuck in to the luscious food given to them by this all-good god that man has constructed, the doctor says it is a relapse.

"I know a man who went into a coma and was thought to be dead. All his friends said he ought to be very thankful that he had had a quiet peaceful painless death as was the will of their god. But he came out of the trance as the undertaker was screwing on the lid, and that man just escaped being buried alive. And then all his friends shouted how merciful was their god and how this man ought to thank him for sparing him, and so he did. A few weeks later he was in a railway accident, and pinned beneath the wreckage he shrieked in agony as the fire swept over him and the escaping steam



scalded him ; and before he died he was more than half-cooked meat. And then he was buried and a mob stood around the grave singing about their all-good god that had called him, in the fullness of time, to his rest.

“And past the funeral cortège a young man stepped briskly, with elation in his heart and the praise of this same all-good god on his lips for having taken that old clam out of the way. He did not say it just like that, but he had got that dead man’s job, and the increased money would save his children from the gutter.

“Do you not see that man *dare* not let the god he has erected make a mistake, and so he was forced to invent this devil ?

“When I was a kiddie I went to a pantomime, and there was a scene of two clowns dividing some fish. The first clown said, ‘Here’s one for you,’ and he passed over one small fish to the other clown, and then he said, ‘Here’s one for me,’ and he put two big fish aside for himself, and so it went on, the first clown gradually increasing his *one* until at the finish he had four or five times as many as the other clown. That scene always reminds me of the claims of the religious groups.

“Look at our hospitals ; they say, and I say : ‘Don’t forget the prostitutes also.’ Ah ! they are the work of the devil.

“Look at our brave missionaries ; they say, and I say : ‘Don’t forget the syphilis and the booze.’ Ah ! that is the work of this devil.

“And what of the Protestant missionaries ? ‘Ah !’ says the Roman Catholic, the Buddhist

and the Mohammedan, 'they are the devil's missionaries.' And the Protestant missionary is busy collecting money so that he can save the infidels, all of 'em, Catholics, Buddhists and Mohammedans, who have been ensnared by the devil.

"Now if I thanked this god for the good, I should curse him for the evil, because he sends the lot. I don't profess to understand, any more than these missionaries profess to understand, why their god lets the devil get away with so much. If fate takes me to death through burning and scalding, I shall scandalise mankind by shrieking curses at that god until the end, but I shall die true to my belief all the same."

"It is not a comforting faith, sir."

"That is so; there is nothing to die for about it, so I do not suppose I'll ever establish it. But this martyr business is just another delusion and sham, and since men have died, or rather been killed for every faith man professes, I think it is another bit of the devil's work, just to confuse man a little more. And provided the faith is there, I see no merit in it. Would any man hesitate to be burnt alive if he knew, as we know, that Valparaiso is in Chile, that as a result he would go to indescribable happiness for ever?"

"Why, I count myself just keeping level with the ant, and a little below the house-fly which has indeed conquered the earth, but I have risked being burnt alive just to pull a few people I hated and despised from a burning ship."

"Tell us about that, sir."

"Some other time perhaps; let's get on with this other subject while I've got the steam up. I have seen devotees crushed to death under the bloody wheels of the Juggernaut car, at a place called Puri in India, and those fools seemed just as worthy and just as insane as the missionary who went out and could not prevent himself being eaten by a crowd of infidel cannibals. Those lunatics at Puri have given their god practically all the qualities that the Christian has given his, including virgin birth, and they have added to their creed a lot of disgusting details all connected with the sexual organs. The temples just to the south of the town are full of indescribably lewd pictures and statues, and every Christian woman and man that goes down to Puri, for the glorious bathing, makes a point of going over these places guided by a woolly-headed savage who minutely describes all the filthy details, and that is about the only time he sees a Christian seriously interested in his life and thought."

"Supposing you wanted to convert anybody to your faith, sir, what exactly would you ask them to believe?"

"I should never have the damned impudence to try to convert anybody, and in return I insist on being left alone. Still it is a question that has never been put to me before and I will try and answer it, but you must give me time to string the words together. I have only been shooting out a medley of ideas as they came, like sparks fly from an emery wheel."

We marched on in silence and at last the lights of Valparaiso began to run up over the top of the ridge we were breasting, until the whole semicircle was twinkling below and we realised that our long journey was practically finished. Down the hill and along the sea-front not a word was said, for everybody was too tired to talk. Just before we reached the mole Plasmon asked me lugubriously :

“ Jacker, if you could have one wish granted, what would you ask for ? ”

“ I don't know. What would you ? ”

“ Get these ruddy boots off.”

We boarded a waterman's boat and immediately five pairs of boots and five pairs of socks were taken off, and we arrived alongside the *Spindrift* with five pairs of hot, tired feet trailing in the cool sea. We limped up the gangway and the captain went into his cabin without saying a word, and we never heard what his tenets really were.

Brave, truthful and generous, clever above the average of his fellows, for he was one of the few men who had worked themselves from the thwarts of a tiny fishing smack to the command of a big ship ; a giant possessed of the strength of a lion, he carried himself at all times with a natural dignity that revealed the secret of his success and the origin of his masterliness as a captain.

And yet, despite his hatred of all forms of established and defined religion, he too had “ erected ” his god. A compound of *all* good and evil,

working his will regardless of the feelings, beliefs or sufferings of man or insect. A god who understood and expected curses, as he understood and expected thanks. A god who with the left hand would sweep out of existence, in a great seismic cataclysm, thousands of human beings, while his right hand was lovingly busy providing the food for tender young tuberculosis germs. A mad undisciplined god, constructed from personal experience, and robbed of everything but power illimitable.

But at heart the captain was essentially religious, for he detected the Hand of God in everything, but he did not presume to read the Mind or to fathom the Wisdom or the Aim. His hatred was not of God but of the folly and wickedness committed in His Name.



## CHAPTER XVI

### A LOST FORTUNE

ON October 24, 1905, we set sail for Iquique, about half loaded with miscellaneous general cargo that had been brought out from Europe, principally from Germany by "Kosmos" liners, and transhipped at Valparaiso. The Chileño tally-man, nicknamed "Terror del Fugo" by the crew, who had checked the goods aboard, came up with us, and was amazingly seasick. He certainly thought that he was going to die, and really it seemed impossible for a man to be so violently ill and yet recover. His olive complexion turned to a vivid green, and he was so far gone that he used to stay down whenever he fell down until somebody shoved him out of the way with a foot. Seeing him huddled in the scuppers just like a bundle of junk that had been thrown there, I said to the bos'un :

"Old Terror must have a weak stomach."

"*Weak* stomach, why, ain't he throwing it a good distance?"

Seven days later we ran into Iquique and were moored, fore and aft, in a tier alongside the *Sea Witch*, a perfect little dream of an American four-masted schooner, whose Captain was a "towney" of our skipper's. We pulled him across in the gig and went up on deck to have a look round, and sitting on the main hatch was the bos'un that had run away from us in 'Frisco. He said he was surprised *we* had not run away before this, and that the *Sea Witch* gave him

more food, and good food, for one meal than he got all the time he was on the *Spindrif*t. But he said our skipper was the best sailor-man he had ever been with, and if he only had the *Witch* he would beat any old steamer. He said that it was difficult to keep her under twelve knots. When our old man came out arm-in-arm with his friend, he noticed the bos'un and said :

"Hallo, Harry, so you've got that . . . sea-lawyer. Does he feed with you in the saloon ? "

It has *never* rained in Iquique. Just behind the port on the top of the sand-hills, some few hundred feet high, are the great nitrate or salt-petre fields, where millions of tons of this valuable commodity are practically on the surface, and the port only exists as an adjunct of these valuable properties. All the water required is brought up the coast in tank steamers. All about the harbour are dilapidated old hulks, being the relics of many fine sailing ships burnt out when loading saltpetre.

While we were unloading some cases of beer, a sling came up dripping a stream of liquid back into the hold. The tally-man stopped work and arranged with the mate to get all the unbroken stuff up first and keep back the damaged cases, so that a survey could be made on board. The mate agreed and said that it would be better if *Terror* went down below and checked the slings before they were hoisted, as it was only wasting time and steam to hoist up stuff and then lower it down again. *Terror* clambered nervously down the ladder, and the next sling, instead of going

over the side into the lighter, was lowered on the deck and hustled into the sail-locker.

One Sunday we had been in and out of the water all day and poor Stockholm Jack, the sailmaker, caught a chill, and getting rapidly worse was rushed off to the hospital. Cherry and Black Peter were detailed to take him ashore, and their tenderness about the job was something to marvel at. Cherry, it is true, was as noisy as ever, and he handed out flowery orders just as he did when a sail was being furled in a gale of wind.

"Easy now, clap on to that other leg there. Now then, take that blank bucket out of the way, you biscuit-eating stiff. Want us to fall down and kill him? Jee . . . sirs. Hey, you. Ain't you ever carried a corpse before? Here, bring that gol-darned gig under the gangway. Lower away his stern, easy at the head there. Got him? Let go all."

Some of the men coming back aboard on the following Sunday brought the news that Jack was very bad indeed. The mate sent Plasmon and me ashore to get a full report from the hospital and to see if we could do anything to make it easier for him. We found him unconscious in a small private room where everything looked very clean and neat. An electric fan was slowly revolving over his bed and a business-like nurse was generally fussing around. We jerked a little Spanish at her, and from the perfect eruption that this caused we gathered that he was about hopeless. He certainly looked very bad, and when the nurse took my hand and

placed it on Jack's I was shocked to find his was stone cold.

Suddenly he breathed very fast and then seemed to sink lower into the bed, and the nurse made the Sign of the Cross. Poor Jack was dead.

It was the first death I had witnessed and I felt very solemn and depressed. I had seen dead men before, but this time I had actually observed the departure of the vital spark and the rapid cooling of the clay left behind and the terrible falling down of the lower jaw. It was just a plain everyday occurrence to the nurse, who switched off the fan and light, closed the door and walked briskly off to the office. Her job was done. It was a corpse now, not an invalid.

A moment later the doctor who had been sent for arrived. He spoke English extremely well, and on hearing that we were from the same ship he told us to wait and make final arrangements with the undertaker. He explained that owing to the intense heat it was essential to bury bodies as soon as possible and Jack would be buried at sunrise. Almost immediately a very fierce little man literally leapt towards us and dashed a paper down on the table and then went off like a gun. This was the undertaker. After several misfires in Spanish he changed to what he called English, and he snatched back the paper, started to question us and write down the answers at a speed that amazed us and with an air of such intense seriousness that he frightened us as well. We knew nothing beyond that Jack said he was

a Russian-Finn and an A.B. aboard the *Spindrift*, but whenever we said we were not sure, or did not know, the undertaker said anything would do, it was not of any importance, but he had to fill in a form with every one of his clients. We soon got into our stride and it went like this :

" Surname ? "

" Jacobson."

" Other names ? "

" Clifford Montmorency Beauchamp."

" Age ? "

" Fifty-five and nine days."

" Nationality ? "

" Russian-Finn."

" Religion ? "

" Any or none."

" Died from ? "

" Death."

" Bah ! I'll fill that in later. Oh ! doctor, what was it ? "

" Abscess on colon, broken before operation."

" Oak or deal ? "

" What ? "

" Coffin."

" Oh ! oak, you bet."

" Brass fittings ? "

" Rather."

" Haulage ? "

" *Haulage* ? "

" Yes, yes. Single-horse full hearse, double-horse full or double-horse hearse and mourner's coupé combined ? Two hundred or two hundred and fifty pesos ? "



"Two hundred and fifty."

"Coupé, right. Wreaths?"

"Yes."

"How many?"

"How much?"

"Ten, twenty, thirty, any price you like."

"Five twenties."

"Notices?"

"Who to?"

"Press, relatives, friends, societies."

"No."

"Sign."

We signed where he indicated, realising with a peculiar thrill that we had personally undertaken, as persons interested in the deceased, to meet all funeral expenses and all replies were true, so help us God. Plasmon said that last bit was our only chance anyway.

We went back aboard to tell the mate what we had done, and to our great joy he told us that we had done right all along the line. He sent for the bos'un and told him to have all hands ready at 5 a.m. for the funeral, and as quite a number of longshoremen fell in behind, an imposing cavalcade followed poor Jack to his last resting-place.

He was "stowed" in one of the Combs that are customary out there. A battery of graves is built above ground, each grave about two feet by two feet and seven deep, and about two hundred and fifty graves in a battery, the top line being about ten feet high. The coffin is pushed into the comb, cemented in, and a neat

little name-plate finishes off the job. This method is a result of the very sandy soil that gets blown about and would uncover an ordinary planted body.

That evening while we were yarning around the main hatch the bos'un asked what had killed Jack, and we told him what the doctor had said. He said that he had been in Colon too, in fact he had done fourteen days in the calaboose there for "digging into a wad of Dago Rogers."

"But, bos'un, this colon is a gut inside you, where you get colitis and all sorts of things."

"Yes, I know that. I was just thinking what clever blokes those old professors were."

"Which professors?"

"Those old Spanish boys that came trooping over here way back three hundred years ago. Up in Panama there is a place where you can easy get colitis or any other darned disease too, and no doubt those old bugs realised that Colon would be a first-class name for the place, just like Christmas and Easter Island."

"Great guns. Well, tell us about this scrap."

"There was a lot of us loafing around the French company's offices waiting for the pubs to open one day and some chap started an argyment about hats, you know, them Panama hats. One man said his hat would go through a small ring, and when the saloon opened we all piled in to borrow the bartender's ring to see if this was so. It went through all right, but the barman said it was a coarse hat compared with one that he had seen some time ago adorning the head-piece of a

Mr. Pasquito, a leading hand with the gun around that district some years before. He said a traveller came in one day with the most astonishing hat he'd ever seen, it was over a yard across the brim, but the owner said he could pull it through the eye of a needle, only he hadn't got no needle with him. This Pasquito, who was asleep or drunk in a corner, slouched up to the bar when he heard this and snatched the hat off'n the man's head. But directly he felt it the devilry dropped out of his eyes and he said he reckoned it *was* the most marvellous hat ever produced. It was too good to fight about, it was the sort of hat that would suit a man doing a little bit of prayer in public, but he'd buy it. The owner didn't want to sell it, because although he had only given a greaser about fourpence for it, it had taken over two hundred years to erect, and there would never be another like it. Pasquito kept clammering for it until at last the owner says: 'Out of sight out of mind,' and he rolled it up and pushed it into a toothpick and shoved the whole lot into his pocket.

"But later on this Pasquito shot that other bloke and collared the toothpick, and there was *two* hats inside it. And Pasquito sent one of 'em to the King of Spain because he hated the Americans.

"I said that I didn't believe a word of that barman's yarn and then he said I was drunk and told me to clear out, and that started the fight all right. It was going good when the police come in, and then all hands set about them and

the little dagoes was being thrown about like sandbags. But thousands of 'em came swooping down and coralled up the place and then swept us all off to the court. 'How many policemen did it take to bring *this* here?' says the Jedge when I come up. 'Fourteen.' 'Very well, fourteen days.' Abscess in Colon, gee! that calaboose was some abscess, you can believe me. We didn't have to work, their system is only for the timers to work, and they go out and do odd jobs like repairing the roads and cleaning the sewers. But casuals like me are kept busy enough picking 'em off. Armour-plated reversible ones they have up there. But a man gets poisoned against them after a bit and then he's got time for other work. You know, them insects line up every morning and follow the new lot into their cells, and lots of greasers have escaped by training these pets to eat through the window-bars. That's so. And fight, why, they used to *lay* for each other, and I've seen as many as a thousand of the young 'uns watching a scrap between two of the Elders just to get a few points. And the bug that got beaten took it like a full-sized man and went off and found a new prisoner for himself, too."

When the party broke up the bos'un walked aft with me to the cabin, and asked if any of us knew anything "about law and making wills and all that sort of frilly stuff." We said we did not but we reckoned Slushy might because he was always talking about when, and for what, a man could be put in irons.



"Slushy be darned, he don't know the legal side of a haricot bean. Now look here, boys, I'm in real trouble, and I'm going to tell you about it so's you can help me. But you've got to promise not to blow the gaff to anybody first. You do, right. Well, me and my mate with 'Chips' and the sailmaker fixed up that passenger business for that nigger, and I've got all the money still, because we'd arranged to share out when we got home. Of course we never *allowed* for anyone going back and dying, and now I don't know what to do with Jack's share. I've been turning it over all ways and it looks only right that it should go to the skipper."

"*The skipper*? By jiminy, I'd like to see you giving it to him."

"I didn't mean to give it to him, I was going to throw it through the skylight, or mebbe get the steward to put it in a Christmas pudding or something."

"Yes, and I bet the steward *would* put it in, I don't think. What right has the captain got to it anyway, he had nothing to do with the job, except play up hell about it every now and then."

"That's so, of course, but what will I do with it?"

"It seems to me," said Plasmon, "that it should go to somebody who did something, somebody who looked after that nigger or helped to bury Jack, or something useful like that."

After a lot of talk the bos'un said we were a lot of clams and he'd have to go and think it out by himself, but before leaving he made us swear



once again not to breathe a word to anyone.

With startling unanimity we had decided that we four boys were more entitled to that money than anyone else, alive or dead, but the job was to get it from that "ruddy moral outrage," as Plasmon called the bos'un.

We pressed our claim on the bos'un every opportunity we got, but he was adamant, and used to put on a superior smile and talk about freedom and justice and brotherhood in a way that drove us mad. Finally we determined to find out where that money was, and then having got possession we thought our arguments would have considerably more weight.

The four "passage agents" lived in the same cabin, just forward of the carpenter's shop, and the first job was to get the three surviving conspirators out at the same time. Faked messages were no good, for we knew that the bos'un would not go out for anyone except the skipper or the mates, and we also knew what would happen to us when it was discovered that the message was a fake, too. And we must get 'em all out of the way for some time, for it was not likely that money would be laying about on the table.

We had several unsuccessful attempts and we got madder and madder until our judgment became so warped that we really thought that if the bos'un lost the seventy-five as well, it would serve him right for being so obstinate about the twenty-five and trying to do us out of our just dues in this scandalous manner. Night after night we used to go over the problem until it

became an obsession, and at last we got so keen on getting it that we forgot the value of the prize and said if we did get it we would give it back at once. Tempers got a bit threadbare and some nasty words were slung about the cabin, and one night it developed into a rough house and blows were freely given. When we calmed down we went along to the bos'un's cabin in a body.

"What's the matter?"

"What the devil did you tell us about that accursed money for? You've busted up our happy home, we've just been scratching and scrapping round like a lot of baboons, and we're fed up. We want to know what you're going to do with that money, and we want to know *now*."

"Do with it? I've done it. I gave it to the skipper three weeks ago, that night I spoke to you about it."

"Bos'un, you *are* a liar."

"Now then, don't you get stirring up any mud."

"Well then, you must be mad anyway. What did he say?"

"First he was mad. He said words was a waste of time and unfortunately it was too late to use a gun. But then he said Jack was a good workman and, after all, the ship had not had to pay anything and he would add it to Jack's pay and pass it on to his next-of-kin when we got home."

"What about the balance?"

"Oh shucks, he don't know there is any more."

"Supposing somebody told him."

"Supposing I kicked somebody's head off."

Yes, there was always that, of course, but it was hard, bitterly hard, to have learnt of that colossal fortune and then to see it pass away for ever.

"How much did you give the skipper?"

"Twenty-two pun ten."

"Should have been twenty-five."

"Oh no, it shouldn't, mister smarty. That escape cost us ten pounds. Our contract was to land him and get him away from Sydney, and we done it, too."

Plasmon leapt about the deck, spluttering and cursing when he heard this. We led him silently and solemnly aft to the cabin. The bos'un was too much for us.

Some evenings later the bos'un came along and gave us ten pounds, remarking that the passage business was a wash-out, there were too many darned sub-agents and ruddy sharks hanging around for a bit of commission.

When unloading was finished we had the very dirty job of cleaning the hold. Every web, angle-iron and stringer had to be thoroughly clean before any saltpetre came in. The coal dust was fine and as soft as flour and every hour or so it was necessary to come up and have a breather and wash out the mouth and nostrils. The captain found me at the pump drawing a bucket of drinking-water to take below, and telling me to wait a minute he brought a bottle of rum and emptied it into the bucket. He

often did nice things like that, but only when hard work had to be done or had just been done.

When this job was finished the "No Smoking" notices were put about the decks and we proceeded to load. Saltpetre is extremely heavy for its bulk, and when she was down to her Plimsoll's mark the hold seemed quite empty, and it was difficult to credit that those few heaps weighed nearly thirty-four hundred tons. The loading and trimming is done by expert stevedores, who carry the three-hundred-pound bags with ease, and are so clever at dropping the load from their backs into its exact position that never a bag is touched again once they have thrown it down.

It is a very clean cargo and makes no dust, and the crew were put over the side to paint the ship's hull. When she was empty all the barnacles were scraped off and the slimy weeds brushed off with wire brushes, and then the "boot-topping" was applied. This is a mixture of red and white lead and tallow and is put on when boiling hot around all that section that will be immersed when she is loaded down. The ship's punt is used and in it is a fire upon which the mixture is kept boiling.

Above this is a three-foot band of bright red, making her waterline; then her top-sides right up to the rail were painted a deep black, with just sufficient driers and turpentine mixed in to give a glaze. A white band, about six inches wide, was painted along the level of the deck, and the Plimsoll's mark cleaned up with a cold chisel and painted white.

The figurehead, a buxom goddess with wings spreading back across the bows, was a picture of gold and blue and white, and a credit to its painters, the second mate and Feltham.

The painting is done from stages, broad planks about twenty feet long with two cross-pieces to keep it a foot clear from the ship's side and allow the men to sit down to their work. The boatswain stays on deck and pops his head over the rail every now and then to keep the men going with paint, advice and curses, and to lower the stages, the rope supports of which run over the rail on to a belaying pin. At times the mate would go around in the gig, his eagle eye alert for patches or drippings from the black across the red, and whenever the captain went, or returned from, ashore he ordered the boat to be pulled round the ship so that he could out-supervise the mate's supervision.



## CHAPTER XVII

### ACTING THIRD MATE

ON the Sunday after we left Iquique the skipper came into our cabin and told us that he had arranged for us to take it in turn to act as Third Mate as the final phase of our training and preparation for the examinations ahead of us. He wished us to understand that it was a serious business, not a game to be played carelessly. He would always be behind us to enforce discipline with the crew, and to add a touch of reality he would have the spare cabin next to the steward's pantry cleaned out, and the acting third mate would sleep there and take his meals with the other officers in the saloon.

He impressed most upon us the importance of maintaining the position with our fellow apprentices, saying that the great test of the capacity to control came from equals and intimates, and he expected all of us to enter into the matter seriously and soberly, and loyally to support the third mate both on deck and in the watch below. Bruno was to be promoted on the following day and we were to have a week each to begin with.

Immediately he left the cabin, Plasmon said :

“ Jacker, my boy, you can look forward to a week in the pig-sty as soon as I am third mate ; Feltham, you can clean out the bilges ; and, Bruno, you will have a delightful week down at the bottom of the chain-locker. I am going

to take this matter very seriously, that is very seriously for you chaps."

Bruno carried himself with all the necessary dignity and made a really fine officer. One night the mate told him to stay by the binnacle compass and "watch the wind," which being interpreted means that Bruno was actually to sail the ship and give the necessary orders to trim yards or handle canvas to get the best possible result from the wind.

The mate went aft to the steering compass and gave the helmsman a lot of orders. Bruno watched her run off a few points and then come up again to her course; then the wind would appear to veer a point towards the beam, which in the ordinary way would mean a pull on the weather braces, or the clew of one of the royals would begin to shake, which would mean a pull on the lee braces to bring her tight up in the wind; and then if she could not maintain her course, the helmsman would be told to steer "by the wind."

In steering by the wind the lower yards are braced back against the shrouds as far as they will go, the topsail yards are run a foot nearer an imaginary line perpendicular to her keel, the top-gallant yards another foot in and the royals again a foot or two in. The helmsman ignores the compass and simply watches the clew of the mizzen royal and just keeps her so that the clew is on the shake. She is then as close to the wind as it is possible to sail her, and naturally the royals would get aback while all

the other sails continued to draw, and by easing her off a spoke or two directly the royal clew shivers, the ship can be kept close to the wind without any danger of being caught aback, one of the most helpless positions a ship can be got into.

Bruno watched these movements for some time and then blew his whistle and told the bos'un to keep the watch handy, and then he went aft to the wheel. The mate asked him what he wanted, and Bruno replied that he had come to see whether it was a change of wind or a damn fool at the wheel before he gave any orders. The skipper was very complimentary when he heard of this and said that most boys, and some mates, would have lost their heads. The rest of us had no idea that this sort of thing was going to happen and we spent many an hour with our seamanship books getting ready for our turn to be fooled, and perhaps this was the mate's object.

The third evening, in the dog-watch, Bruno came into our cabin, after politely asking permission, and disgorged a lot of rolls, some cigars and other odd booty that he had collected.

Feltham took the next turn and he had an uneventful week, except that at dinner one day the captain cross-examined him with such speed and diversity of questions that he got thoroughly confused and left the old man convinced that he had learned absolutely nothing in his three years at sea. The following closed the examination :

“ Breeze on port beam, red light a mile ahead,

land a mile to starboard, mast-head light and both side-lights some vessel four points on port bow, your speed six knots. What would you do?"

"Pretend to be ill and send for the captain, sir."

Then the irrepressible Plasmon's turn came and we knew all about it at seven bells, twenty minutes past seven, on his first morning. His big red cheery face was pushed into our doorway and he bellowed:

"Come on, you *boys*; look alive there, my *lads*; away forward and ask the cook if the THIRD MATE'S coffee is ready. Jump, you blighters, jump."

A well-aimed sea-boot sent the new third mate back to his cabin, but there was a dangerous grin tilting the corners of his mouth as he clambered up the poop ladder to go on watch at eight bells. It was my trick at the wheel, and after swaggering up and down across the deck between the wheel and the steering compass for some time he looked at me with an "I've got you" twinkle in his eye, and then shouted so that every word must have been heard by the skipper and the second mate at breakfast in the saloon:

"Keep her up, *boy*; steady, don't snatch her like that, my *lad*. God! you've run her right across, don't you know anything, my *boy*? Now, steady her, my *lad*, steady her. *Try* and keep her on that, my child, and don't be afraid of it, it won't bite you. Why in hell



don't you watch her? she's off again. Here, stand away, *boy*, and I'll show you how to steer. The boys they send to sea these days are enough to make you sick. And say, sir, don't you get sulking around here, my *lad*."

Of course I did not move, I had quite enough to do not to grin, and then dropping his voice to a whisper he said: "Where's Bruno?" and after I had told him, he went forward to give Bruno what he called "a taste of hard case." A few minutes later the captain came on deck and with a hint of a smile flickering across his face, showing that he had heard, he asked:

"Where's the third mate?"

"Gone forward, sir."

"What course did he give you?"

"South a half east, sir."

"Very good, *try* and keep her on it."

Plasmon found Bruno waiting outside the bos'un's locker for a serving mallet and he asked:

"What are you going to do, *boy*?"

"Getting a mallet to serve that mizzen stay where the hanks have chafed, sir."

"Right, I'll come with you, my *lad*, and show you how to do it."

As Bruno got on with the job, Plasmon sat on the boat near by and muttered "Pshaw" and "Tchah," and then he bustled up and said:

"Not bad, *boy*, but it's not even, my *lad*, Look at this, did you think you were tying on a bib? When I first went to sea they taught a boy to do this properly in ten minutes; they walloped it into 'em, my *lad*, but they made



real sailormen of 'em. Now watch me, young fellowmelad."

Bruno told him, in a vicious whisper, to go to the devil, and he grinned and said: "All right, where is old Feltham?" who in due course was maddened by a lecture on how to put paint on a bolt rope before putting the canvas and serving on.

But all determination to "wallop it out" of Plasmon disappeared when, the night before I was to relieve him, he slipped into the cabin and unloaded the finest cargo we had ever run through from the lazarette.

When my turn came we were getting well down south and the weather was too dirty to permit any work about the decks, and most of my time was spent running between the bos'un and the mate. But I got my own back on Plasmon by sending him forward to see if the side-lights were burning about every twenty minutes. After the fifth time he came up with a face designed to represent absolute panic, and shouted that both lights were out and there was no oil in the containers. Feltham was responsible for the lamp-locker, but as I knew Plasmon was lying, it was no good sending for him, and a fatal pause let Plasmon know that he had stumped me, and as he walked past to go on to the main deck he whispered: "And you can go and light them yourself, you stiff." And as he went down the ladder, although I had said nothing, he bellowed in a voice that could be heard fore and aft: "Aye aye, sir-r-r-r-r."

At tea-time the mate asked me if I could play chess, and on learning that I was very keen he got out a set and we had a game. He kept up a running commentary all the time that made serious play impossible, and he had his own names for most of the pieces.

“ No, that will NOT do, your parson will come sneaking down here I suppose. Now, if I push this shrimp (pawn) up, yes, that'll do. Oh ! you are coming down the starboard side, are you ? I see, that parson of yours is after my butcher (king). How's that ? Can't go there, why ? All right, astern then. Excommunicated, eh ? What about my old donjon (castle) ? ”

I managed to beat him, and then to make the games a little more interesting I offered to give him a knight and a bishop. He solemnly took the two pieces I left off the board and asked could he put them where he liked. Just for the fun of it I let him put my pieces with his own, a shred of spun yarn being their identity mark, and with three knights and three bishops he leapt on me like a tiger and simply tore my defence to rags. And after this game he gravely remarked that there was not much in it between us, with one game each.

The mate reminded one of an oyster, his shell was nearly always closed tight, but when he did come out of it he was very nice indeed, and a most entertaining companion. A hint of disappointment in life added a touch of sombre humour to his remarks, which often contained weirdly distorted bits of classical knowledge,

relics of his school-days to the wisdom of which he had added not one iota in his thirty years of manhood.

He packed away the chessmen with the care and skill of a stevedore, and said that he was glad the voyage was nearly over.

"Do you expect to get command this time, sir?"

"No, I've given up hope of ever being in command. The only boat I'm likely to skipper is the one old Carbon pulls across the Sticks. On every ship I've been mate on, and I have been mate for twenty years nearly, the number one has been like this one with another twenty years of skipper in him. Except once when I shipped out of Cardiff on the *Nullamore*. I could have gone on another ship, but I found out the captain of this one was an old man of about seventy and he was generally reckoned to be ripe for dying. Just off Lundy Island we got into a collision with a clanking coal tub and away went the *Nullamore* for good. And just to add a touch of irony to my luck, the captain was lost all right and then the owner regretted that owing to the loss of the gallant ship he was debarred from the pleasure of offering me the command. It seems to me I'm like old Tantalus, with the grapes just out of reach all the time."

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE MATES

“ I’ll tell you why I am glad the voyage is nearly over,” continued the mate, waving a stubby glistening pipe-stem to emphasise and punctuate his remarks, “ this number one is too much for me. Not on deck, there he’s as good as any mate could wish for, but he talks the head off me at meal-times, and the things he talks about are away up in the air and do not appear to matter to me at all. But *he* gets worked up, and if a man does not answer he says he is sulking and he won’t have it, and a hundred to one if you do answer you will be wrong, and then he says you are a blamed fool and he won’t have that either. It’s a regular Schiller and Charabdis.

“ Only yesterday he picked up the water-jug and looked through it for about a minute and then said, ‘ There are a hundred million infusoria in every cubic inch and yet the eye cannot even detect a cloudiness. Fancy every one of these protoplasmon specks of life being equipped with a liver just the same as *yóu*.’ Now what in thunder *could* a man say to that? so I went on eating, and after a bit he said, ‘ It would be interesting to know how Jane made his calculation.’ Just to say something to show I was listening, I thought I would put him right there, and I said ‘ *Her* calculations.’ He slammed down his knife and fork and shouted ‘ Jay—en. J-A-E-N-S, you idiot.’ Then



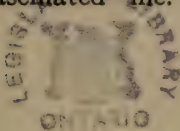
I knew he had been at that encyclopædia again.

"Then he went on, what he calls following the subject to its logical conclusion, all about perhaps there was a hundred million some other 'oria' in the liver of one of these infusoria, and every one of them more important from a sanitary and hygienic point of view than all the sailors, *and* mates, that ever went to sea. So I said, 'Still, if it wasn't for those sailors you and me would be looking for another job,' and he flared up and roared at me, 'There you go again, wrapping the entire universe around yourself. I wonder if your thoughts *ever* get above your belly'; and then he stamped into his own cabin and slammed the door in a way that scared all the infusoria in my liver, anyway."

"He was off the deep end about religion when we went up the mountains, but is he always like that?"

"Not always, but it is like the sword of Damn—oakles, you never know when it's coming. One day I studied up a lot of stuff from *Enquire Within*, edition of eighteen hundred I fancy, and I tried to catch him. Directly we sat down I looked at him solemn as a judge, and said, 'The duckbill platye-puss is undoubtedly one of the few remaining links between the animal and bird life.'

"He was off like a hare and he chased that subject sky-high in no time, and God bless my soul he played *my* hand in a way that absolutely fascinated me. Before we had finished the





meat he was away back in cosmic slime, and when he pushed back his pudding-plate he was up to the neck in 'the foamy masses of protoplasmon that, via the mice-tozeers, originated all life and from which the bug and the bishop have descended on parallel lines.' "

In the old sailing-ship days four-, five- and even six-month passages were not uncommon. The fine four-masted *Palgrave* put into Sydney some time in 1904 with stores almost exhausted, after a run of 214 days from Philadelphia, and eighty-five more days passed before she reached her destination, Hong-Kong.

On every ship the captain was the only man aboard who had no regular routine of work. He kept no watch and if he cared to make it so and his mates knew their business, he had nothing to do in fair weather for the whole twenty four hours. In rough weather or when making land every captain took charge, although his supervision often consisted only of popping up on deck at any odd moment to see how things were going on, but in the long fair-weather crawls through the tropics there was nothing that a captain *had* to do.

Every captain took up some hobby, for his very position made him lonely and he was robbed of the pleasure of a good day's work aloft or about the decks, or steering, and dignity kept him from the dog-watch yarning and play about the main hatch.

Our captain had taken up reading, and according to the mate "he went through a book like

a bookworm and never missed a page." Naturally in the few hours that he could freely indulge in conversation the latest information absorbed had to be pulled out and aired, and then dissected with that uncanny, pessimistic white logic of his, logic that tore away the veils of nature and man and exposed the truth, or a possible truth, in all its naked horror.

To him the limpid pool was reeking with the germs of disease and death; the fresh bloom on the cheek of beauty was but the forerunner of the maggots that gnaw and destroy, and the glories of a sunset but the threat of a volcanic eruption that would hurl countless souls to a cruel death.

This merciless logic is the penalty of loneliness and reading without understanding, without such wisdom and understanding, at least, as will fill the heart with the joy of life and breed an optimism and courage that will select and retain only the best.

Perhaps it was the mate's inability to enthuse over the infusoria that put the skipper in a bad temper, but whatever the cause I was the only one of the third mates not to have a meal with him. Just as I had brought all my gear back to our cabin the captain came in and said:

"You all did fairly well, and you can take another week each after we cross the line. I have entered a blank third mate in the articles at four pound a month, and you have each earned a pound . . ."

"Thank you very much, sir."

" . . . which I am putting against the stuff you stole from the lazarette, you young brigands."

The second mate had come straight from his apprenticeship to the *Spindrift* and his undoubted skill in seamanship proved that he had wasted none of his time. He claimed to have been " put through it " while a boy in an unparalleled manner, and certainly his toughness at the age of twenty-four was evidence of education in a very hard school. He was an exceptionally hard-case mate in the making.

He made a striking contrast with his senior. The mate was slow, steady but very sure, and when he was handling the ship in a breeze or a hurricane he displayed no signs of excitement. He would wait, patient and impassive, for the exact moment when the changing direction of the wind called for the next manoeuvre, and then his voice, clarion-like but emotionless, would ring along the deck.

The second used to leap about the poop and shout his orders in a querulously excited manner, as if he was afraid that despite his accuracy some thing or body might upset everything. But although he made very much more noise about it, he knew his work almost as well as the mate did, though sometimes his rushes about the deck and the swearing and shouting made it appear that he did not really know what he was trying to do.

When tacking ship, for instance, the mate would stay near the wheel and shout the orders, " Hard-a-lee," and so on, and he would not

move so long as his practised eye saw the yards moving and the ropes being handled ; but the second, never mind how nicely the ship came round, would shriek his orders to the man at the wheel and then dash along to the break of the poop to hurl curses at the men on the braces, back to the wheel, and then rush back to yell more threats and curses at the men. The mate did the job as a good officer confident of a good bos'un and men, the second did it as a good officer determined to get it done properly despite all the other fools on the ship.

The mate had the kindly tone and the humanity bred from much similar experience in his behaviour towards the men. He was a stickler for discipline on deck, and often his horny fist has taught a sullen sailor the correct way to say " Sir," but in his watch below he displayed many signs that he recognised the common sailor as a fellow human being. He had a specially warm corner for the older men who thoroughly knew their work, and he would seldom pass Black Peter, or Stumpy or Cherry, without exchanging a few words. The men liked and obeyed the mate.

The second mate hated all sailormen, presumably because they were content to remain sailors, and he was at no pains to conceal his contempt. He cursed them not as the mate did, as a matter of custom and almost of affection, but as if he meant it and wanted them to understand that he meant it, too. The men hated and obeyed the second mate.

He was utterly devoid of a sense of humour ;



to him life was a ceaseless and serious business of keeping others down and lifting himself up, and this conception had so gripped him that he had almost forgotten how to smile. Naturally we were keen to discover how he fared with the captain, but much bait failed to draw him. The captain was something he hoped to be : he was above him and therefore an object of admiration and emulation, quite as much as the sailors being below him were only fit for hatred and contempt. Cherry disliked the second intensely and prophesied that he would never live to get command, as one of these days a well-aimed belaying pin from an infuriated sailor would promote him forthwith to another and very different sphere. He said :

“ Men stand it from the mate because he’s an old shellback and don’t mean it anyway. They stand it from the second now ’cos he’s just a pup, but he takes himself seriously, and one of these days he’ll meet another man that’ll take him seriously, too.”

Round the Horn, eastward at mid-summer was just a yacht trip compared with our experience going west in mid-winter. The same roaring gale was blowing and the same mountainous sea running, but this time it was right astern and the days were long and bright. Very high wind is usually associated with black driving clouds or leaden skies with torrential rain, but here we experienced a full gale in bright sunshine and a warmth and balminess in the air like that of an English spring.



In the winter the great sullen greybeards roar and rush angrily at the ship as if bent upon her instant destruction, but now they gambolled and danced about in the bright sunshine like good-natured giants, giving us a friendly push onward and a cheerful salutation as they broke in a smother of foam and gurgled and chuckled under the counter.

The disturbance of a wave extends as far below the trough as the crest is above it, and given no artificial impediments a ten-foot wave will begin to break at that point where the crest is twenty feet from the bottom. The seas about the Horn, and also in the North Atlantic in winter time, are not like the steep banked waves that break around the coast. Down in 55° South once a wave gets started there is no land to hinder it right round the globe.

With waves sometimes forty and even fifty feet high from trough to crest, the crests are four or five hundred feet apart. These gigantic rollers resemble the rise and fall of undulating meadow land. They fortunately never break in entirety, for if they did such a mass of water would smash the biggest ship to pulp, but often the force of the wind will pile them up, until becoming steeper and steeper some ten or fifteen feet finally curls over and breaks in a wide hissing commotion on the surface of the ocean.

At times the weight of a ship as she "goes up the hill" will bring the crest toppling over and then the deck goes down suddenly, much like a lift, and the water seethes and foams along

the ship's side, or perhaps comes over the rail in a veritable cataract. Those who have only seen ships in dock are incredulous when told of seas "over the yard-arm." They look up at the graceful spar some fifty or sixty feet above the water and forthwith refuse to believe in such monstrous waves. In a measure they are justified, for a sea over the yard-arm without taking into consideration the angle of the observation platform would be a very terrible thing indeed, and if any sailor ever did see one, it would be the last thing he did see and no landlubber would ever hear about it.

The two sketches will explain how this phenomenon is possible. They are drawn roughly to scale and depict waves fifty feet high, five hundred feet between the crests, and a ship



Following Sea



Beam Sea

over three hundred feet long with lower yard-arms some fifty feet above the deck.

In the sketch showing a following sea it is obvious that the look-out on the forecastle-head, as per his dotted sight line, will see the oncoming roller apparently above the main-yard, and as the ship rises to fall over the crest of the next giant the man at the wheel will see this sea rushing away well over the fore-yard. The other sketch shows the same thing from a beam sea point of view.

In a moderate gale a ship will run before these mighty waves and keep her decks dry, but a little more strength in the wind and the crests are piled up a good deal steeper, and then at the point "A" some feet of water will splash aboard from every sea, but obviously as the sea is running unhindered along the ship's side no volume of water will come aboard.

With a beam sea it is very different. When water does come aboard it is obvious that it comes aboard the full length of the ship, which is in fact acting like a breakwater. Then a terrific volume, hundreds of tons, comes crashing over the weather rail, and beats the ship down into the water, as the weight rolls across and smashes its way over the lee rail. When the seas come aboard so unceasingly that they endanger the ship or the men who work it, the vessel turns tail and "runs before" the gale as in the first sketch. She is then out for safety and her true course is a secondary consideration. If there is not enough sea room to run

the vessel is swung round nearly head on to the sea and kept there by means of a staysail forward and the helm hard down aft. She is then "hove-to." Sometimes heaving to is not sufficient; then a "sea-anchor" is made from boats, old sails and other encumbrances that will remain awash, and thrown out ahead, the vessel being tied up to this as she would be to a buoy.

From the above sea sketch it is obvious that as the sea runs up and under the stern the rudder will be lifted clear of the water and the ship become temporarily unsteerable. As the crest goes forward past the centre of gravity the stern crashes back into the water and the rudder kicks, despite the worm steering gear, in a way to test the strongest arms.

It was such a kick that first tore the wheel from the helmsman's hands when we were nearly lost on the first crossing to Valparaiso. Before we had time to work the braces, aside from the "rapids" on deck, she "broached to" as in the second sketch. She was then rolling across the steep crests with her yard-arms pointing into the wind and her sails were flapping and hammering about instead of being "full" and so steadying her up considerably.

Staten Island, bleak, rocky and uninviting, was soon dropped astern, and shortly we picked up the southern trades and were back into real fair weather. Then commenced the work of getting the ship fit for the owner's eye. The four-hour watches were abolished and all hands, except the two mates, were kept on deck all day,

a system called by the sailor "pulley-hauley" watches. At night all hands, except, of course, the officer in charge, the helmsman and the look-out, slept about the decks and were only required to remain in a condition that would permit them immediately to carry out any orders essential for the sailing of the ship.

During this time both mates were very decent and never blew their whistles except when absolutely necessary, and we often would have several nights running without disturbance.

It was a glorious job painting aloft in bright sunshine and a fresh breeze bringing the colour to the cheeks and song from the happy heart within. Far astern the wake could be seen with now and then a twist in it denoting when the man at the wheel had let her run off a bit, and all around the brilliant blue sea bedecked with white horses, and the old trade wind whispering through the rigging and exchanging remarks with you.

Nearly two hundred feet below there was old Slushy outside his galley, slowly but artistically peeling potatoes, and then here comes Cherry with a paint-pot in each hand and he pauses as he passes Slushy, and the wielder of the brush aloft knows exactly their conversation. There goes Feltham with the two copper side-lights, sparkling and glistening in the sun, and over goes Cherry to pick them up and examine them, and as he goes forward to put the lights in the little towers Feltham turns his head two or three times. And up aloft I know exactly what



sort of remarks he is hurling after Cherry. Then a tiny smudge appears on the horizon, and then putting the brush into the pot, which is tied to a foot-rope, and making a funnel with both hands you roar down to the mate:

“Ship ahoy, sir.”

“Where away?”

“Point abaft the weather beam, sir.”

“Aye, aye.”

And then all the little heads on deck suddenly turn into red, sunburnt faces as all hands glance aloft to identify the breaker of such interesting news. And after that Slushy goes even slower with his work, getting off his saucepan every few minutes to go to the rail and gaze steadily at a point abaft the beam, and wondering if she will get near enough to signal, and what ship it is, and is it one he has been aboard, or anybody else?

It is ticklish work at the extreme yard-arm or reaching under the bellying sail, and one had to be very careful when climbing about not to grasp a stay or bar that had just been painted, for safety aloft depends on having hold of something and having hold of it tight, whether it be sail, jack-stay, shroud or ratline.

The mate and the bos'un and his mate prowl round all the time with eyes alert for “holidays” or patches missed by the painters, or hair strokes left by their brushes. The skipper dodged about with a saucer of aluminium paint and silvered every little piece of brasswork that could not be cleaned with bathbrick and oil except at

the risk of staining and spoiling near-by paint-work or woodwork. He would give a nut a little dab and then stand back and survey the result, with his head on one side and with all the seriousness of an artist examining a growing masterpiece.

A gentle breeze took us across the Doldrums, and for nearly six weeks we kept on our course and never furled a sail, and only touched a rope when trimming yards to meet a slight change in direction of wind.

## CHAPTER XIX

### THE BOATSWAIN

THE boatswain, without asking permission, but then he never did things like that, had brought what he called his truck aft to our cabin, and used to come in every evening to "tittivate 'em up" ready for going ashore when paid off.

"These darned pants are sure the worst ever I had, and I've had some astonishing fit-outs in my time, too. I got these off a man in Newcastle, a long thin slab driving one of those trams."

"Was his name Slim?"

"I never heard his name, but he was once aboard this ship, so he said. I swopped these things for some cigarettes, but he's done me in the eye; why, they wouldn't fit me arm, but they're long enough to make a galley chimney. Well, never mind, if they will go on at all they're going on alright. I suppose you boys will be dressed up to the nines, with your brains clamped down under a billycock hat and your chins wedged up with a biled collar. Slim, eh? and a blamed good name for him too. Wonder what the hell *he* went to sea for."

"He was shanghaied. What did you go for, Cherry?"

"I just drifted there. My father was a very religious bloke, the founder of Salt Lake City . . ."

"Get out, that was a man called Brigham Young."

"Alright, you know more about my father than I do."

"But you can read about it anywhere, there's lots of books about Mormonism."

"Books! You don't believe what you read in books, do you?"

"Some of it."

"They only tell you 'some of it,' too. There was a lot of blokes with Columbus, but the books don't tell you what was the name of his bos'un or the cook's mate. I read meself silly until I found there was nothing to 'em."

"What sort of books, Cherry?"

"Any book was welcome to me, and I never found them true. There was one bit was right, though. It was a book about some pilots on the Mississippi, and a man in there gets talking about the skeeters up around Lake Providence. He said four of them 'birds' could throw a man. When I was up there some years ago, on the hobo as usual, I found an empty shed one evening and I thinks it would be a fine place to sleep. After my grub I went inside and lay on some twigs that I had collected and was snuggling down for a real good sleep, when I see the door swing slowly open but nobody come in, and I thought it was just a puff of breeze. Then a humming set up all around and suddenly I felt a stab in my leg as if some one had cut it clean off. Then that blamed door fell slowly open again and then there was two hummings as the wind was beat up all about. I had noticed an old biler laying out at the back, near an old

quarry, and pulling my coat over my head I rushed out and clambered into that and slammed that door just as a body come ' wuff ' up against it. The chimney was open so's I could breathe, and I knew none of them skeeters could get down that small hole. All of a sudden there was a ping, and the ram or whatever you call it . . ."

" Proboscis."

" Yes, proboskis of a moderate-sized mosquito, don't seem fair to shorten up *their* name somehow, came through the plating and waved about searching for me. I jammed meself back and then took off one of my boots and beat that proboskis back flat like a clamp. Then here's another ping and I clamped down another proboskis on the opposite side, but they kept going for me and soon I had about eight of them tied up good and solid. Soon a sort of swinging motion come over the biler, and I judged they was trying to shake themselves loose, and slowly the gentle movement sent me off to sleep, and a very good sleep I had too. Next morning I crept out and it took me two days to get back to that hut to get my duds."

" Was the wound very bad ? "

" Them insects had flown that biler nearly twenty mile."

" Now you've spoilt it by exaggerating at the end of a good story."

" That's a true story, sonny, although it ain't in a book."

" Well, now tell us the truth about your coming to sea."



" I was only eight when my father died, some say murdered . . . "

" Don't they know yet ? "

" No. He was running out of church one very dark night and he run into a spider's web and was hove back against the church door and busted his brains out and . . . "

" My hat, but where's the possibility of murder ? "

" Well, some says that one of the elders was jealous of my father's raise to be a high priest, and he *trained* that spider to build that web."

" Great guns, and is this your true story ? "

" It is. Of course, when the old man was gone that elder got going good, and he chased us out of our home and generally scandalised us out of the city, and so I lit out for Chicago when I was only eight. I couldn't get any work until one day I was mooching round a corner and ran into a very big man that was going very fast the other way. Without thinking I says, ' I'm sorry,' and he says, ' That's alright, son, if I was annoyed *you'd* be the first to know it,' and I says, ' Don't you be so blamed sure.' Then he stopped and talked to me. He was the skipper of one of the inland lake grain carriers, and I went back to his ship as cabin boy.

" They was a very tough crowd on that ship, and sprouting up fast I was soon a real hard-case, and used to scare all the boys in the district when I was ashore. If I couldn't lick 'em, which was very seldom, I could petrify 'em stone cold with my language. About that

time a flock of missionaries settled down near Lincoln Park and started in to reclaim all the bad bold sailormen, and I was roped in too. When they heard that my father had been a minister, what they called special efforts was made to snatch me from the fiery furnace, and fix me good and solid on the proper course.

"But they made it too blamed sudden for me, a man's got to be saved slowly, and so I cleared off without any discharges and beat my way over to 'Frisco and got on a ship bound for New Zealand. Well, you know what being at sea is like, so I won't tell you anything about that. I changed from ship to ship until I was bos'un at twenty-five, and I paid off as such in London the year there was a big jubilee procession and an eclipse of the sun. Do you know how I remember that?"

"Suppose you got drunk and stopped the procession, or perhaps the eclipse."

"No, I applied for a job as a warder and we had to pass a sort of examination, and there was something about those events in the dictation. There was a long wait for the results, and as usual I was very soon broke. I fixed up an address at a small shop in Gravesend where I left all my papers and duds, and then comes what you call a coincidence. I was lounging around Liverpool Street station seeing if any of the automatic machines would answer to a bit of tin when a man says to me, 'Want a job?' 'Yes.' 'Carry this bag, it's damned heavy, but it ain't got to go far.'

"I picked up the bag and threw it on my shoulder, and he looked surprised and came up and pinched my arm, but he didn't say anything then, but some distance on we was passing a pub when he says we would go in for a rest and a drink. When the drinks come he leant over and says, 'Can you use your strength?' 'How do you mean?' 'Can you fight?' and I told him to fetch along *any* man and I'd show him. I didn't think he was serious at first, but he says, 'Alright, let's go up around Covent Garden.' And then we hove the bag into a cab and he tells the cabby to drop us near the N.S.C. On the way he told me he was a fight promoter and if I turned out good there would be money in it for me, and for him because of the surprise.

"'But how are we going to fix this fight now?' I asked, and he said if I answered back quick and saucy in this district there would be no trouble about starting a fight. We left the bag in a pub, and then sauntered around a lot of dirty little side streets, and then he suddenly barges into a powerful-looking man that was holding up one of the buildings there, and as he did it he whispers to me, 'Go on.' It seemed a crazy idea to me, but in those days I was out for anything that come along, and so shovin' my face up against this bloke's I said, 'You ruddy . . . why don't you shift your carcass when you see two gentlemen coming along?' 'Blimey, look at 'em! *Gentlemen!* Couple of ponces more like,' and I reached for his collar and slung him out into the road.

"Then he made a rush at me, and a fight was certainly started. And he *could* fight, too, and once when he got me against the wall I thought he was going to kill me. But I shoved him clear and jumped out into the road, and as he rushed at me again I got 'im a terrific swipe right between the eyes with all my weight behind it and he went down as if he had been shot stone dead. He lay there in the gutter with blood running off his face, and when I knelt down beside him I see that it wasn't blood from a cut lip or his nose, but it was spurting out right from his throat, in great big gushes. The fight promoter looked down close at him and then suddenly started to run, and so did I, and I never stopped running or moving somehow until I got back to the shop in Gravesend.

"And there was a letter for me appointing me an assistant warder in Maidstone Gaol, and next day I shipped before the mast on a vessel bound for Melbourne, and I don't know now whether that bloke was killed or not. Anyway, I had a chance of going into gaol both ways.

"I done a little more seafaring and then I went back to the States and I met Mac, who had just come back from Klondike, but I have told you about him, except when we went into the jewellery business."

"Where was that?"

"Anywhere. One day we was up the Portland River cooking some salmon we had just caught, when an empty skiff comes drifting



by. We swum out and climbed aboard, and there was a lot of fishing tackle and some clothes laying in the bottom. We turned over the duds and in the hip pocket was a big wad of stuff, and when we cut it open there was nearly a thousand dollars in notes. Mac jammed the notes into his shirt, and rowing the skiff out into the stream we jumped overboard and swum ashore, and then we ran up and threw water over our fire and sat in the bushes to see what happened.

"Soon a steam-launch come shooting by, and there was two men in the bows wrapped up in towels and shading their eyes and looking ahead. We judged they must have been out fishing and gone in for a swim and their boat broke adrift somehow. We went up to Seattle and got a brand new outfit each, and then after blewing most of the tin we started this jewellery business.

"Mac was a very good talker and he sort of laid the seed and I come along and reaped in the harvest. He'd go in and ask to see some very expensive gadgets, rings or something like that, and while they was fetching 'em along Mac would bung a piece of chewing-gum under the counter, and while he was turning over some of the best pieces he would snake one round and shove it into that gum. It was a very brainy idea, because if they missed anything they wouldn't find it on him and he would most likely be able to stick 'em for something for insulting him.



"Well, of course, he was very sorry to trouble 'em and all that sort of punk, but they hadn't got what he wanted—good-morning. And a little later I would go in looking like a hayseed or a country loon and buy a dime stud and swipe that ring at the same time."

"Cherry, look me in the eye. I read that yarn in a magazine."

"*So did we*, but then we went and done it. I didn't say we was the patentees, did I? We soon worked through Seattle and Tacoma and then we went off up to Canada, and poor Mac got killed there. Hallo! one bell already. Better put this truck away, and all through this blamed talking I ain't done a stitch to-night."

It was amazing to hear this clear-eyed giant talk so shamelessly about fighting and swindling, but he was the very essence of the code of the hobo. John Barleycorn has done most to build up and preserve this wonderful code of the world friends. Be on the same ship, share a meal or more particularly take drink with the bos'un and his kind and they are your true friends for life. Not only are you and your property safe from their attacks, but they will cheerfully risk life and limb to protect you. Those who scorn their company, or even those who while possessed of exactly similar ideas to their own have not yet had the good fortune to enter their own little circle, are looked upon as legitimate prey.

Let that same jeweller go into "Billy the

Mugs" and yarn with Cherry and Mac, take their drink and stand his own round, every now and then, and Heaven help the poor unfortunate who tries to *come it* over the jeweller while they are about.

Our captain was now riding the froth of this hobo existence, but he knew its workings and its codes. His presents of a bottle of rum now and again were but his offerings to the reckless and genial, but generous and faithful spirit that rules the heart of every real sailorman and hobo. That was the infallible sign by which he conveyed his graduate fellowship, and his knowledge and recognition of their kind, and the means by which he called forth or intensified their loyalty.

They are rough diamonds and there is many an "internal" commotion, for it is of their code that the only real solution to any argument is a punch in the jaw, but once their loyalty is gained, it is there for ever, despite terms of endearment and sulphurous grumbling that astound and shock those cramped souls that live always in the "uttermost darkness" of smug and selfish respectability.

## CHAPTER XX

### CHERRY THE HOBO

A FEW evenings later Cherry took up his position, seated tailor fashion on Feltham's sea-chest, and silently went on "riveting" a patch in the knee of Slim's famous blue-serge pants. We were playing poker and for some time nothing was said beyond the few words necessary to carry on the game. Then Bruno turned, as he shuffled the greasy old cards and said :

"What's the matter, Cherry? Can't you invent any more yarns for us."

Cherry flared up and looked really ugly for a moment.

"That's always the way, you babbies only just weaned know everything, or think you do. Straight from the cradle to rule the ruddy world. Just because you ain't seen it, it can't be true, and you ain't seen anything yet either. You know as much of life as you do of poker. Get on with your game, or suck a bottle or something and leave me to this gol-darned pair of pants that blame mouldy-headed, biscuit-eating, swindling constipated engine-driver give me: curse him, if he was here I'd . . ."

He was getting madder and madder and his voice louder and louder as he turned those trousers about his hand; finally he dashed them on the deck and leapt upon them with both heels grinding them into the deck, and still muttering

threats and curses. We were quite used to this sort of thing and Bruno said :

" Sorry, Cherry. Come on, tell us what you did next."

Cherry was mollified at once, but he was still mad with those trousers, and hurling them through the door he sat down and said :

" All right. It was those blamed pants that set me mad. Where was we anyway ? "

" Killing Mac in Canada."

" Oh yes, and a pity it wasn't that stiff you call Slim. Well, that was in ninety-nine. It was not far from Regina, and as I was wishing to keep meself out of the public eye I went down due south until I hit the Yellowstone River, and I followed that over the Rockies until I come to the Park. One day a Marshal rode up to me and I judged I was gone. He looked very fierce and asked me what I was doing and where I was going, and I told him I was a naturalist chasing after insects and butterflies. He asked me a lot of questions, but I know all about bugs and them sorts of thing, and so after telling me not to do it again he cleared off, and so did I.

" I must have lost meself a thousand times in that wild country to the north of the Salt Lake, but at last, all in rags and with my toes way ahead of me boots and dead beat, I reached Salt Lake City, the first time I'd seen it for over twenty years. I was so disreputable that I was ashamed to search out my relations, but the very first thing I did brought

me luck, as it should do when a poor stiff comes back to his own home town. I picked out a nice-looking house and went up to see if I could get a hand-out or p'raps throw me feet. . . ."

"What is that?"

"Don't you know nothing? A hand-out is when they hand out some grub for you to take away, and the other is when they ask you inside and you can throw your feet under the kitchen table and eat comfortably. Why, a child knows that in the States."

"All right, go on."

"It was lucky I knew the place and the people of course, and I sprung the bushy-whiskered old bird who come to the door a yarn about having tramped ten thousand mile, and I looked it too, to answer the call of the faithful, and I piled in a lot of the dope I'd heard when a boy. It was amazing. The old boy rushed inside and dragged me with him and then he made me sign a paper, and after that he put up a wonderful fine meal and he sat opposite me as I scoffed it up. He told me there was a recruiting campaign going on amongst the brotherhood and he reckoned I was the prize catch up to date, and he'd probably get a boost up the ladder for doing it. He said his statistics was very good even before, although there was a mean sneaking hound called *Rollins* always crowing about a safe-breaker that he snatched right off the step of the gaol. But now he reckoned Mr. Rollins would have to take a back seat.

"I felt like slamming the crazy old fool, but



this Rollins must surely be my elder brother Ogden. I wanted to find out his address because I was out to be saved several times at a price. At last he let out the address and as soon as I could I done a bit of prayer with this bird, and then thanking him I rushed off. Thirteen women and forty-six children come to the door when I rung the bell . . .”

“Get out. How wide was the hall?”

“Thirteen women and forty-six children come to the door when I rung the bell, and when I asked if Mr. Ogden Rollins lived there, *all* of ‘em shouted that he did. I looked very solemn and says, ‘Tell him his religious brother has come back from the edge of hell.’ You see I left it both ways, and, as I reckoned, they *all* shrieks ‘Ogden, here’s another convert.’

“My brother come rushing out shouting ‘form fours’ or something like that, and they made way for him by backing against the wall, and then he grabs my hand and shouts ‘Come in, brother,’ and he struts ahead of me into the parlour. Then he slams a paper down and asks me to sign, and then he let out a mighty yell as he watched me write Joseph Rollins, Son of Obadiah Xerxes Rollins.

“He dashed out of the room, tearing his hair, and after sitting around waiting I got up and started to look at the pictures hanging round the wall. These was nearly all of kids, and under them was names like Edward VI and then in brackets (Mary) and then Adam V (Mary) and again Joseph III (Elizabeth) and Adam

IV (Elizabeth). Must hold the History classes in here, I thinks, and then I come to a chart, like them temperature charts they keep in hospitals, and there was different coloured lines running zigzag all over it. And so I discovered this was Ogden's portrait gallery and this thing was his birth-rate index, it had got it written underneath as a matter of fact."

"Matter of Cherry fact."

"Ogden come in and put down a wad of dollars and starts off: 'Joseph, we heard you were dead and I never expected to see you again this side of the grave, or the next. I will be brief, for I cannot have you about here. You remember that piece of land near Ogden, that was given to father for joining in with Lee and some Indians, and wiping out a crowd of accursed Gentiles near Mountain Meadows; that was sold for over eight hundred dollars and two-fifths of that sum comes to you. Now you knew nothing of this and there was no reason why I should have told you, and in return for this money you are going to promise never to come back here again. I'll throw in a ticket to El Paso for you.

'You have not been here for many years and you have managed to keep going somehow, and it's only fair to me that you do not now come in and crab my position here. I am running very well with Smith, the President, and there is every chance of me becoming a Seventy.'

"What is that?"

"Something very high up in the Mormon

Church, next to the Apostles, I think. He goes on, 'But it will all be up a gum-tree if I've got a brother like you floating round.' So I took that three hundred dollars, and after I got it stowed away about me I told him I would have left that crazy place for half the money, and as to coming back I wouldn't be seen dead in the place. He come to the door, and for the benefit of the population of that house he says, 'May God be with you,' and then he slammed the door and I saw his face at the window watching me go out of the gate. And I've never seen him since, and don't want to even if he is up to eighty-five by now."

"How many wives did he really have, Cherry?"

"I told you. All that business has been stopped now, and there won't be any more of it, but in the old days a man just walked out and married all the servants he wanted. First he'd marry a girl he liked, and then he'd go out and marry a cook and p'raps a housemaid. Then as kids come along he'd marry a nurse and then he'd soon want two nurses, and then some more maids. Then as the kids grew up he'd want a governess or two, and then a tailor-ess, and then some more nurses and governesses, and so on. There was no end to it, do you see, and it saved wages all along the line. A woman will eat the same whether she is a wife or a servant, of course, but there was a wonderful saving in bedsteads as well."

"It's all very interesting but there are too many frills to it, they sort of hide up the truth."

"Frills be durned, I'm leaving out the fancy bits on purpose. But I don't want to tell you if you don't want to hear it. While you was being tucked up in your warm bed by your mammy I was scratching my living all over the world like a hen in a coop. When you're as dry behind the ears as I am, and give up reading them blamed books and go around and see for yourself, you'll find that Mr. Joseph Rollins, B.U.M., sticks to the truth like flies to flypaper."

"What happened next?"

"I just eat and slept. S'pose you'll believe that, anyway."

"Sorry, Cherry. Go on, please."

"There is a place situated in the State of New Mexico called Santa Fé, and a man named Rollins was there. Do you believe that? Good. And there was the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and there was a war on between England and the Boers. Do you believe that? You do: well, we're getting on. I fell in with a man called Jimmy Flynn and he was just the sort of tearing stiff I was looking for. He had astonishing big hands and he said he could grip a nigger's head and pull his face clean off easy, so I thought him and me ought to make a good team down in Mexico. I told him that p'raps I didn't look like it but I was a regular walking bank and he could come with me until it was busted. He cottoned on and then he told me he was considering going over to Africa. He had been in the Philippines, and he said it was most



astonishing the amount of junk a man could pick up behind an army. So I give the ticket to El Paso to a hayseed that was making up to Denver and we struck out for New Orleans, a place that you'll find in one of them blamed books of yours, right up at the top of the Gulf of Mexico.

"Jimmy was against paying fares more than necessary and we got slung off that train all along the line, but at last we fetched up in New Orleans. 'Now,' I said, 'let's have a real bust up before we go,' but Jimmy says better not because the money would be more use in Africa. After a bit we got steerage passages to Cape Town and there was still two hundred odd dollars left. Then Jimmy says we would spend the odd twenty dollars, and we went up Canal Street and into a saloon. It was very late when we got aboard, and I was so full up that I just fell into me bunk and went off to sleep.

"Next morning as soon as I woke up I could feel we was on the move, and after seeing that it was impossible to get a wash because of the hundreds fighting round the basins, I went on deck to see Flynn. I couldn't see him anywhere, so after a bit I asked a man if he'd seen Jimmy. He says, 'Do you mean that man that brought you aboard last night? He just seen you go off to sleep and then he says you'd be all right and he went off ashore again.' And so he did, and so did all my money.

"Of course I could do nothing, and after cursing around I went down below again to get cleaned



up. There was still a mob round the basins, but I took up me position in the line and I put my gear down on a ledge near the basins. When it was my next turn I noticed the bloke over the basin pick up my toothbrush, and he was just going to use it when I fetched him a good kick, astern and amidships, and asks him what the hell is he doing with my brush. He says, 'Yours, I thought it *belonged to the ship.*'

"That's one thing I never go without, and many a time have I been glad I had it with me. There's nothing like a toothbrush to quench your thirst with a little water, and clean teeth will bring a hobo more grub than a lot of soft talkee-talkee.

"This bloke was a South African, named Palmer, and him and me was together all over the Transvaal for nearly a year, and although he wasn't a patch on Mac he was a very decent cove, and we only separated when he got killed by a ranting old Boer. But I fixed up the Boer all right. There ain't no sense in me telling you what happened, because Canada and Africa is two countries will never see me again, unless somebody takes me there when I'm dead."

"Tell us roughly, Cherry, never mind the details."

"I blew a man to hell."

"Figuratively speaking, of course."

"What's that?"

"A figure of speech consists of words not strictly accurate in themselves, used to convey emphasis. Like shook his teeth out, for instance,

used to convey a violent shaking, but nobody expects or understands that any teeth were really shaken out."

"*Don't* they? Well, they must be pie-cans then. I blew that old Boer to pieces with about a pound of buckshot, and he was ripe for hell if ever a man was. And you talking of teeth reminds me of a chap I met in the mines near She-wha-wha."

"How do you spell that?"

"C H I H U A H U A. In Mexico, which was my next port of call. This chap was a driver, and as I had the job of looking after and splicing all the hauling ropes I used to work with him a good deal. His face was covered with little dents, like pock marks, and one day we was talking of all the diseases and complaints that was killing off men in thousands down in the Panama zone, and I says to him, 'You've had a very bad go of smallpox, ain't you?' and he says, 'Why?' 'All them marks on your face looks like it,' and then he tells me how it happened.

"That ain't anything to do with smallpox. Some months ago there was a cocky little mestizo running the signals on the Pachuca incline, and one day there was a jam-up owing to a lot of trucks jumping the line when running back empty. This Lomas gets very excited and waves the wrong signal and over goes about ten tons of ore on to a lot of men that was working below the trestles. Lomas comes rushing up to me and spits around and then throws his hat in the dirt,

but I knew I was in the right, so I only just smiled at him. Then like a Mexican he whips out a knife, and then I sat up and took notice. I kicked the knife out of his hand and then I took him by the shoulders and begun to shake him. He was too small to hit, you understand, but I was real mad and perhaps I shook him more'n I meant to. His eyes started to bug out, and then all of a sudden a shower of teeth come flying all round me, and as I only wanted to scare him a bit I let him go then. There was twenty-seven teeth picked up there later on, and these here marks was made by that storm of teeth.' "

Plasmon silently arose, and going to one of the cupboards took out a piece of stale duff and silently and solemnly presented it to Cherry, who just laughed, and then picking up his gear went forward to his own cabin.

And so, and often, did this lovable piece of the world's flotsam and jetsam entertain us with his endless reminiscences. He was often careless about details, and there were times when we would try to catch him by suddenly asking, "Where was that?" or "What was his name?" but back would flash an answer usually full of gaudy details, proving that he had been to the place even if it did not serve as evidence that the wonderful incident happened.

He was a regular, and at times astonishing, encyclopædia of the habits of animals, birds and insects, but the principal event in every place was a fight, generally with "bulls" or

policemen, getting swindled or swindling somebody, and it was of these incidents that he remembered every detail.

To him, life was a series of circles, each with the four cardinal points: Work, Money, Fight, Broke. One could imagine him boxing his compass with a cheery acceptance of each alteration of course shouted by the wonderful Providence that had designed and fitted him to go through this amazing stirring of the maggots that man has dignified with the title—LIFE.

Work.	Aye aye, sir.
Work, by Money.	Coming up, sir.
Money.	Made it, sir.
Money, by Fight, a half booze.	Aye aye, sir.
Fight.	Fight it is, sir.
Fight, a half Broke.	She's steady, sir.
Broke.	On her course, sir.
Broke, by long tramp.	Made it, sir.
Work.	Aye aye, sir.

What matter the details? the world was his country and everywhere it was always the same.

He had earned his living in a thousand different ways, the most curious being:

"After I left Chihuahua I worked down south to Oaxaca, meaning to get through to the canal zone, but I stopped for a bit boiling insects . . ."

"*Boiling* insects, what for?"

"There is a small bug there called Nee-een,

the greasers spell it N I I N, and in some places it's called Axe. It's about the size of a dime-piece and it lives only on plum trees, but it don't do the fruit any harm, in fact some people says it improves the plums by making them stoneless. Its back is covered with white powder, like Father Christmas, and in the fall of the year they is collected in millions and boiled up to make varnish. The Aztec Indians has done this for thousands of years, and the varnish they make beats ours to a frazzle. The bloke I worked for was an American chemist who calculated to shove it on an export basis, but the money ran out and the place was busted up and so back I goes on the trail that led me to this old windjammer."

Cherry! He was nearly everything that is bad, but he was everything that is generous and manly. I loved Cherry, and perhaps by that very affection revealed the wander-lust that some years later sent me searching for the same care-free, devil-may-care existence.



CHAPTER XXI  
HOMEWARD BOUND

ONE day the other three apprentices got into trouble with the skipper and a lot of silly jingling lines occurred to me. I had not dared to produce any poetry for nearly two years, but I decided to risk another publication.

The captain stamped about the poop and his face was a fiery red,  
And he stopped in front of Feltham and this is what he said :

“ You spindle-shank-ed thingumybob, you *silly* what’s his name ?

D’ye think if we go north or south, it’s just the something same ? ”—

North-east-by-east a quarter east is the course  
I heard him give—

“ You spindle-shank-ed thingumybob, you’re hardly fit to live.”

So then the captain went on deck in weariness and wrath,

And Bruno fell with a pot of paint right across his path ;

The old man stopped and licked his lips and clenched his hands on high

And hollered out, “ This blankey lout would make a rooster cry.”

Hacking away at a rotund stern as on the deck it lay,

He shouted "Whoosh" and also "Whish"  
and then went on his way.

And Plasmon threw a dirty rag out of the cabin  
door,

He did not look; that dirty rag wrapped round  
the captain's jaw;

The skipper stopped to take it off, then rushed  
around the hatch,

Shaking his finger in Plasmon's face: "Why  
didn't you shout 'Catch'?"

And then he said he'd eat his head if such a  
thingumey

Wouldn't go to blank, via a plank, when he  
first came to sea.

And why the what and how the which he could  
run a ship

If they sent him a bunch of blanketty pups  
*every* something trip?

But by the boats he saw a sight that filled his  
heart with joy,

He raised his hand and slapped a back and  
shouted "What a boy!"

For Jacker was there with well-brushed hair  
and a smile on his cherub face,

Lashing the mast to the galley door with the  
end of a topsail brace;

"Blanketty blank," the captain cried, and  
"Blow me something tight,

While boys *like this* are sent to sea, the Empire's  
*quite* all right."

A test of good poetry, it is said, is the way it stirs its readers. This *stirred* them all right. I was hurled into a corner and every portable thing in the cabin was thrown on top of me, and then some forty stone of healthy young manhood leapt on to the top of the pile. I shouted for mercy and threatened them with death, but they only laughed and did not "unpack" me until I had promised never to write any more. And then when I asked for my "work," Plasmon said he was going to keep it and show it to his father, after he had transposed our names.

Each day the ship looked smarter, and when we crossed the Northern Tropic she was an absolute picture. Her spars were resplendent in fresh white paint and the rigging a sky-blue colour except where the served stays and shrouds gave a sharp contrast in black. The deck-work was painted white and artistically lined in French grey, and the decks all freshly caulked and holy-stoned as clean as a kitchen table, and the teakwood skylights, doors and companionways scraped and varnished, while the brass-work had been silvered or polished until it glittered like jewels on the fair hand of beauty.

The only job not then completed was the poop deck, where the pitch was being hacked out of the seams and replaced by white putty, and when that was finished even the mate had to admit that he could not find enough work to keep all hands busy all the time. The ship's company reverted to the customary four-hour

watches, and the watch on deck was spent in sailing the ship and preparing for the great day of a sailor's life: Pay Day.

It was fine after a long day painting aloft or working about the decks, a great big supper of dry-hash, a pipe or two with the yarns or a game of cribbage, to wrap a rug around yourself and sleep under the stars on one of the hatches. There is no sleep so refreshing as that in the open air, and the warm soft breeze playing gently about the head seemed not only to chase away physical fatigue, but also to be a mental tonic destroying all bad temper and uncharitableness. While we slept on deck the crew were the best-tempered crowd imaginable, and even the skipper unbent sufficiently to take a good hiding from Plasmon at cribbage.

As we raced northward Cherry's language became more grand, masterly and awe-inspiring than ever. He was intensely keen in his professional capacity as boatswain to bring the ship sparkling and resplendent to a home port, a pride and joy to the owner's heart, and it was fine to observe the care with which he scraped the most awkward piece of the teakwood mouldings with a penknife given to him by Mac and pinched by Mac from some "bull" attempting to arrest him. He appeared to think that this job could not be properly carried out unless everybody and everything connected with it, from the naval architect and the builders down to the deck boys, were continually consigned to perdition in speeches bristling with amazing

personalities and constructed from the most outrageous and flowery epithets in his extensive vocabulary.

No one took any notice of his abuse except perhaps to go the more quickly to carry out his orders, and it appeared to be accepted as quite reasonable that language should get worse as the ship got nearer home, for the entire ship's company used bad words more freely. There must be some scientific explanation of this habit of swearing common to all sailors and hoboos, nearly all soldiers, most workmen and a considerable number of the better classes, more especially those who have travelled about.

I venture to suggest that it is, in fact, just sheer poetry gone astray, and I will endeavour to bring evidence in support of this, I believe, original explanation.

When stirred to excitement (poetic) by natural beauty and so forth the poet finds the ordinary descriptive words insufficient properly to express his thoughts. He refers to the angry sun, to smiling landscapes, or calls a ploughed field the loose bosom of the willing earth. Or again he traces descent from the angels, or the heroes, or fairies in order better to convey the moral and physical beauty of his characters. His vocabulary is so extensive that he is able to select words that are fitting and do indeed add beauty and dignity to the commonplace.

The sailor when stirred to excitement (any) also finds common, unadorned words insufficient, and like the poet he seeks for other words



with which to ennoble and decorate his thoughts. But his vocabulary is limited and deals mostly with the concrete, and consequently his ideas are confined to what we may term the lower strata of poetry. *He* refers to buckets, mates, cities, countries and continents as besmeared with the red fluid that circulates through the bodies of vertebrates. *He* will grandiosely invest a heavy sea or a gale of wind with an eternal capacity for procreation. He traces the descent of a man, or of a ship, through the female line, to the canine species.

It is worthy of much emphasis that no "cuss-word" used by a sailor has any meaning in itself and he no more expects to be taken literally than the poet. He intensifies, and nearly all his astonishing words are adjectives or adverbs used to burnish up a poor insignificant noun. Perhaps this little story will convey this idea:

Two sailors were walking near Dartford and passed one of the cement works where there was an exceptionally, or very, or mighty, or towering, or extraordinarily high chimney. Said one: "That's a . . . high chimney, Bill," and Bill replied: "Oh, I don't know, not so . . .". If the words be taken literally, Bill meant that he could not see much blood about it, but he did not deny that it was a high stack all right.

As evidence against this explanation may be urged the fact that the swearer will expunge his favourite words when speaking to anybody that he knows is not accustomed to such words. But he does this not because he is ashamed of

them, but because he knows that his hearer will not appreciate them in all their beauty. So also the poet talks straight unadorned prose to his bookmaker (the one that makes bets, not books) for the same reason. A bookie would probably faint if asked for the odds about "yon prancing courser whose bosom swells with pride and whose fiery eyes flash with the lust of contest, and whose sire, immortal Minoru, browsed in generous dales of Manton."

Just as among poets there are good, bad and indifferent, so also do swearers vary. Cherry turned a commonplace order or remark into a magnificent passage, adding dignity to anæmic nouns and throwing his meaning into an easy rolling and faultlessly delivered piece of histrionic oratory. The gaudy words were lost in the sonorous periods. Others throw their intensives in anywhere, without inspiration or method, and the result is a slow, halting, jagged, disappointing piece of poetry with the nasty words sticking out like hat-pegs.

And the captain's weird theory of eternal balance comes into this matter with great force. The poet raises thought to a higher level and points mankind towards heaven. The sailor, any sailor, during his active career consigns to "Hiram K. Satan" a tonnage equal to the entire mercantile marine and sufficient mates and other bipeds to populate a continent.

The second mate shared Cherry's belief that a sailor might fail to comprehend an order couched in "drawing-room" terms, and his unpoetical

use of an objectionable word nearly led to a serious breach of discipline about this time. One day the watch were hauling on the main weather braces but could not win an inch. The second stamped impatiently about the poop and then shouted :

" Oh, don't play with it, pull away, you lazy . . . "

He used a term that implied wholesale illegitimacy, and although we apprentices had added considerably to our vocabularies, this was the one word we could not and would not tolerate, especially from, and in the whip-like sneer of, the second mate. Bruno dropped the brace as if it was red hot, leapt up the poop ladder and almost shaping up to the second said :

" Do you include me ? "

" No, of course not, get off the poop or . . . "

" Well, next time you say so, say pull away, you . . . , all except Rideout, see."

The second was so surprised that he did not reply then, and Bruno came back to the brace mumbling to himself something about knocking heads off. Some hours later Bruno was at the wheel and the second came up and said :

" You're very touchy, but I'm durned if I know yet whether you mean you are not a . . . , or you have not got to pull with the rest of 'em."

In about 40° North we experienced a squall of extraordinary violence. In bright sunshine a fresh breeze astern was bowling us along, with all sail set, at about eight knots, when a

cloud crept over the weather horizon as black as ink, indeed it very much resembled a blot of ink on blue-tinted blotting-paper. As it rushed towards us we could see the water just ahead of it being lashed into a riot of foam.

"Stand by topgallant and topsail halyards," roared the skipper, who had put aside his saucer of silver paint and taken charge. Suddenly with a crash like an explosion the wind shrieked into a hurricane and the rain descended in a veritable water-fall. No one could look to windward for an instant, and so the captain's signal to let go the halyards was missed and the ship shuddered and groaned as the fury of the wind beat against all her canvas and hurled her forward. The sea was beaten absolutely flat, but was covered with foam which was blowing about in big, coagulated lumps much like soapsuds.

In a minute we could see the brightening below the squall and within five minutes we were bowling along in bright sunshine, with the breeze astern, and that mad inky-black squall was tearing towards the lee horizon and rapidly decreasing in size until it dipped down and was lost to view. And then the utilitarian mate, "Bos'un, get a few men holy-stoning this poop while the fresh water is on it."

It is difficult to understand why or how the squall concentrates itself and rushes forward as a separate entity. Wind is the result of pressure and this squall had tons of room to spread itself in every direction, but it came along



like a projectile, and its area of disturbance could not have been more than a square mile. The speed of the squall was estimated to be fifty miles an hour and the speed of the wind in the squall about eighty, and its rainfall was something like a foot an hour.

From where and why does it come and what finally stops its mad career? One could almost imagine that squall arising somewhere off New York and saying to the gulls that it had made up its mind to run across and see Africa, and Heaven help anything that tried to stop it.

We did not try to stop it, but it is worthy of record that the captain's estimate of the ship's speed before the full force of that squall was over twenty knots per hour, and the man at the wheel said that she steered perfectly.

About this time a wonderful collection of "store" clothes were dug up from the bottom of sea-chests and examined and repaired with loving care and surprisingly skilful fingers. The rigging about the fore deckhouse was bedizened with many-coloured garments dancing and flapping in the breeze, while in every sheltered corner two or three sailors were to be seen industriously plying needles and thread and telling each other their plans for the future.

Suits that had done service for years were overhauled and carefully cleaned, Cherry dispensing the necessary "turps" from his locker. Missing buttons were attached and weird patches built in where necessary. Every dog-watch found



all the crew busy over washtubs washing THE shirt, or darning *the* socks, and it was quite pathetic to observe the motherly care expended on a ruin of a hat that any respectable dustman would contemptuously reject.

When all the cleaning and repairing was finished a great exchange took place. Cherry in possession of two pairs of socks bartered one pair for a waistcoat and waxed mightily indignant when the lucky owner of two waistcoats demanded a plug of tobacco as balance of value. Collars against neckties, trousers for boots, braces in exchange for shirts, the traffic went gaily on with many a laugh and many a protest about blood sucking, until every man was more or less equipped with "real" shore-going togs.

The fortunate possessors of well-stocked sea-chests we apprentices were the capitalists in this bartering and could afford to dictate terms. We refused payment in garments and for a number of singlets and other pieces of attire we added mounted shark fins, models in bottles and such-like to our collections of curios. Although seldom seen nowadays these models of full-rigged ships, obviously too large to be got into the clear glass bottle as they appear when finished, were very common some years ago.

The model is made so that the hull will just go through the neck of the bottle and its mast and spars will lie down flat. Putty is poked into the bottle and by means of a pointed stick is fashioned to resemble an almost land-locked

harbour, and about the land portion small buildings and lighthouses are placed. Then the ship, with its spars and gear neatly packed flat on deck, is pushed in and pressed into the putty, and a thread running through the tiny bowsprit is pulled, and hey presto! up come the masts, and a little touching up with the stick and all the yards are nicely squared. The thread is then burnt off with a red-hot pin, and a thin paint brush soon removes all traces of the ingenious *modus operandi*.

As we ran into the Channel a thick fog settled down and the captain decided to run past Falmouth and go into Plymouth for his orders. Eddystone lighthouse was the first bit of England any of us had seen for three years and we all felt a thrill of excitement and anticipation as the noble old tower slid slowly astern and the coast around the Sound could be clearly discerned. We sailed through the breakwater entrance and dropped anchor on March 1, 1906, after a fine passage of eighty-five days, and the captain immediately proceeded ashore in the pilot boat.

While he was away a sweepstake was got up, at five shillings per ticket, for the port of destination and pay-off. Plasmon drew Greenock on a share basis with the rest of us, but it was to be Hamburg, and "Chips," the ship's carpenter, became wealthier by some five pounds. His wealth was on paper only, for there was not a coin aboard the ship, except with the captain, and he was left to collect his money outside

the Shipping Office after paying off. His opinion of his prospects can be learnt from the fact that he sold his ticket to Slushy for two plugs of tobacco.

## CHAPTER XXII

### PROMISE AND PERFORMANCE

NEXT morning we ran out into a strong westerly breeze and boomed merrily up Channel. Off St. Catherine's we were overhauled by the five-masted, full-rigged German ship *Preussen*, the largest sailing ship ever afloat. She made a picture of supreme beauty as she ran past with every sail taut and a curling spray at her stem like that of an ocean greyhound. The mate judged her speed to be a full twenty knots an hour, and she certainly made the twelve we were doing look extremely slow.

We learnt later that she had run from Calito Caloso, in Chile, to Hamburg in sixty-five days, giving a daily average run of over two hundred knots, a truly wonderful performance considering she started from and later crossed the tropics in the run.

The *Preussen* and her famous sister the *Potosi* were the finest sailing vessels ever constructed. Unlike many British ships, built only to *carry* and with lines which the sailor aptly describes as "bows like the breasts of a buxom woman," these ships were built to *sail* and had the grace and beauty of a clipper despite a carrying capacity of nearly eight thousand tons. The lower yards were approaching a hundred and thirty feet in length and with other spars in proportion. Gasolene winches were provided to assist in handling these mighty sticks ; these same winches

could be run into the hatches for unloading and loading cargo.

They represented the last dying struggle of the sailing ship, and a great deal of the Romance of the Sea was lost with the sweeping of such beautiful craft from the oceans by the squat, ugly but very efficient tramp steamer.

The reality of the approaching pay-day was now looming large in everybody's thoughts, and with nothing to do but sail the ship there was ample time for yarning about the wonderful plans for the future.

Black Peter and Blocher were the only two men who had stayed by the ship throughout the long voyage, and they each had about one hundred pounds to come. Their curses upon the skipper for not giving bigger advances were now turned to blessings. Owing to joining in America at almost double the wages of those who joined in any other port, Stumpy and Spud each had the vast fortune of nearly one hundred and fifty pounds due, while Cherry with his wages as bos'un and the profit on the "passenger business" had nearly as much to lift. The rest had more modest sums to come, but nevertheless every man was looking forward to an amount that to him was wealth indeed, whether it was expressed in several hundred bottles of beer or in many weeks of idleness, according to the fancy of the payee.

But, indeed, none of the wonderful plans contemplated anything like the inevitable purple patch. Not one of them was going to be caught



*this time* by a crowd of runners and pimps. No fear of that, they knew these birds by the back, thank you. You just observe what happens to the first one that talks to me. Why, he'll think he's got mixed up with a thunderstorm. Oh, yes, a pretty good chance the pimps had of getting away with it this time, they did *not* think.

Peter was going straight from the shipping office to South Germany to see a patient, loving mother that he had not seen, and he was unable to write to, for some fifteen years. He reckoned he had enough to buy a shop, or maybe an orchard—a pear orchard—and settle down, but if not he was coming back on this ship. The other night when at the wheel he had asked the old man, who had said he would be *pleased* to take him again.

Blocher was going to put his money in a bank, if they would take it, until he had finished his service in the German Navy, and then he was going to study to become an officer or get married. But Peter's was a good idea and maybe he'd open a ship chandlery business in his native Dantzic.

Stumpy was after a job in his native town of Grimsby, but whatever happened he was not going to sea any more. He said: "It don't lead nowhere, and at my age a man ought to be looking round for a good anchorage before old Satan comes swooping down and sinks him in deep water where moths do destroy and thieves do break in and steal."

Slushy was going to open a restaurant near the London docks, and so long as he had it there would be free meals for his shipmates off this ship. But he was not going to serve beer: he calculated it would be difficult enough to collect the money from his "clients" when sober, and if he was to sell beer he might as well throw in the restaurant with the first pint.

Cherry was morose and seemed impatient under the coming burden of wealth. He had no plans except a fierce determination to avoid drink, although he added wistfully it seemed to him he got into trouble sober or drunk. He was "stark" sober when Mac handed in his checks anyway. But he was not going to worry as some blamed thing was sure to turn up, if it was only going to gaol.

We picked up a towboat off Heligoland and docked in Hamburg on March 9, my nineteenth birthday, having been exactly one thousand and seventy-nine days on the complete voyage.

It was too late to pay off that day, and the crew sat about in moody impatience. In the evening a number of touts came down to the wharf and started a shouted conversation with the men, but the skipper forbade anybody to go ashore and ordered the gangway to be barred to all visitors. Nevertheless, six or seven bottles of whisky were lowered down and odd bits of pay-day were forthwith mortgaged to these very men who were going to think they had got mixed up with thunderstorms.

Although we had nothing to come, we four

boys went up to the shipping office next day, just to see how it was done. A very voluble German refused to let us go in and so we stood around waiting for the men to come out. The bos'un, being senior, was paid off first, and he came out with a handful of money and joined us, saying that he would wait for the rest of them. All about the building were lounging tough-looking customers and the bos'un said every one of them was a runner or a pimp.

Slowly all the men came out with their money and joined us, and when the cook arrived, the last, the bos'un called :

“ Well, boys, just one to bury all but the best for shipmates.”

We piled into a near-by pub with the rest of them and came into the bos'un's round, and then once the game had been started there was a clamour that it should go on. Black Peter said he insisted on giving a round, for he'd never left a ship yet without doing it. Round number two. Then the cook started to talk, and the bos'un said that they must have one with Slushy to see if his drink was any better than his grub. Round number three. We cleared off and left them all dancing and shouting as the drink took effect, and as we came out we saw all the sharks outside waiting patiently for the familiar “ fall ” of their prey.

We went back to the ship to be very disappointed when the skipper told us that the owners had wired that we were to stand by the ship until the new mates joined her. As our articles

did not expire until March 20, the owners were quite justified, but we had all along cherished the hope that we would be allowed to go home at once. We had nothing to do on the ship, so up came all our old navigation books and we had a few days' preparation for the examinations ahead of us.

At last some money arrived from our parents and we were able to break the monotony by going up town in the evening. I bought my first bowler hat, and was mightily surprised when the shopkeeper shouted out *fifty* as my size, for it was much later that I discovered that they measure in centimetres around instead of in inches across as we do.

Coming back to the ship through the dock area we used to look in at certain well-known beer-houses to see if we could meet any of our late crew. One evening we heard the ship's name in a boisterous conversation booming from a crowded corner and there we found Stumpy and Spud. Their money were being spent freely and naturally we were welcomed into the crowd; we were in fact the finest apprentices God ever put breath into. We learnt that the other dozen of the party were fellow boarders of Stumpy's in a runner's house, and in fact they were the finest lot of sailors God ever put breath into.

They were having a final bust up because they expected to sail next morning on the *Claverdale* bound for San Diego. Not one of the others had a penny, but it is the knowledge that every



man will act in the same way under similar circumstances that makes or encourages this reckless generosity. Before we left, Stumpy threw a twenty-mark piece on the counter to provide another round, saying: "Well, there's the last of the . . . anyway."

They told us Slushy and Black Peter had already gone to sea again in the same ship. Of Cherry they knew nothing except that he was left drunk, battered and sound asleep in the pub near the shipping office, but they expected he was in gaol "because these here Germans is pretty down on the rough stuff." Oh, those resolutions!

The recklessness of the sailor, any sailor, with money in his pocket is proverbial, but the fact that his recklessness usually takes the form of an all-embracing generosity has silenced any serious censure. It has come to be looked upon as an adjunct of seafaring life just as a habit of chewing tobacco or walking with a slight roll. The whole system of employment of crews is mainly responsible.

In those days crews were signed on for a voyage of three years or until the ship returned to a Home port. In the case of a British ship Home port meant any port in the United Kingdom and certain specified ports on the Continent. Consequently men who had signed on in America or Australia were due to be paid off as soon as we reached Hamburg.

There was no defined system of advances during the voyage, whether it lasted three months



or thirty-five, and these depended entirely upon the captain. Some captains worked on the basis that the more the men had to come the less likely they would be to run away, and the more amenable to discipline at sea and in port, and their advances consisted of doles of a pound or two in each port. Others were a little more generous, but few, if any, advanced more than a third of the wages earned.

As a result the sailor's life consisted of alternate long periods of comparative poverty and abstinence and brief runs of great wealth. He was given a handful of gold at the same moment as he signed a document releasing him from all discipline, and he walked out of the shipping office a free man possessing very much more money than he really knew what to do with. It is not very surprising therefore that he was unable to resist the advances of innumerable sharks and pimps, only too capable of showing him how to relieve himself of his sudden wealth.

As a natural corollary to the personal control of advances, most captains carried a "slop-chest." This consisted of supplies of oilskin, sea-boots, blankets, tobacco, matches, knives and such-like which were sold to the men while at sea. Once a week, usually Saturday dog-watch, the slop-chest was opened. The skipper sat one side of the saloon table with a list of wages and advances, while the second mate did the shopwalking. Some captains were sheer profiteers, but most of them were reasonable enough in their charges.

This dual system, control of advances and provision of necessities, was generally supported by the entire seagoing community, but the result was to rob the sailor of the "feel" of the responsibility of money for months, often years, and then hurl at him a comparatively large sum of money. Naturally he ran amok.

All the work and trials of the past were forgotten at the shipping-office door, which became the entrance to a sort of fairyland where money was thrown at sailors. Unfortunately there was such a crowd of sailors that a man only got a turn every two or three years. But in the interval he was fed, housed, clothed and procured enough tobacco and not quite sufficient beer practically without drawing a coin from his pocket.

It is not to be wondered at that pay-day became as something distinct from the work that really made it. It was just a miracle that happened at times, and what was the good of saving, or even being careful with, the money? Even while his pocket was bulging with coin, at his side would be a man capable and desirous of instantly providing food, house, clothes, tobacco and not quite sufficient beer! Come on, Mr. Barman, set 'em up again.

Despite the long arduous period of earning, the sudden wealth was "easy come," and Jack ashore had no difficulty in finishing off a very true proverb.

The evening of the eighteenth found us very busy weeding out our possessions and packing our

sea-chests, and almost as the last knot of the lashings was tied a burly figure rolled through the door and sat down. It was Cherry, transformed and utterly respectable in a new blue suit and a new "lid." When he heard that we were sailing for London next morning at daylight he said he would come with us.

Without thinking, and much to the surprise of everybody, including Cherry, I invited him to come and stay with me for a bit. I rather wanted to display him, knowing from experience in the Newcastle Mission that he could be a very subdued and quiet Cherry, although it was doubtful for how long. He said :

"Right-o, and let's buy a bird and then your dad will think you've brought home a parrot and a monkey like they always do in them blamed books of yours."

As instructed we called at the owner's office directly we reached London and were much flattered at our reception. After some friendly gossip about the long voyage the owner endorsed our deeds and then got us on his side for eternity by saying that "following exceptional reports from the captain" he had very great pleasure in giving us a bonus of fifty pounds, twelve pounds ten shillings each, but that he trusted we would permit him to practise a little economy and make out one cheque for the whole amount. Plasmon's name duly adorned the firm's cash-book.

A whispered consultation after the cash had been drawn from the bank led to me approaching

Cherry with an offer of ten pounds, which he indignantly refused, saying that he had earned money, he had inherited money and he had stolen money, but he had never "taken" money, and he was not going to start a game like that to oblige a lot of pie-faced young apprentices, although they were the best he had ever been to sea with, or ever heard of if it came to that. As it seemed a day of good fellowship and compliments we solemnly, and joyously, apologised and told him that he was the best bos'un we had ever been to sea with or even ever *read* about.

But despite our wealth we roamed about in an aimless fashion, for the shadow of farewell was hanging over us like some dark cloud. Bruno was bound for Yorkshire, Plasmon for Devonshire, and Feltham and I were for different parts of London. It was difficult to keep the lump down as we parted after those truly wonderful years of experience and friendship. For three years we had equally shared troubles and joys: food, money, tobacco and trouble had all been "whacked out" with meticulous accuracy. On the same ship and cooped up in the same cabin men see more of each other in three years than the most intimate friends ashore do in a lifetime.

And what a difference from the four pale-faced youths of nineteen-o-three! We passed some of the time at King's Cross by getting weighed and we hit up a combined weight of nearly fifty-two stone, Bruno heading the list with a nice round two hundred pounds, or thirty



pounds heavier than when he pulled number three in the crew some four years before.

Addresses were exchanged and then big, hard hands met in a firm grip, and suddenly the only evidence of the "fact" of the *Spindrift* was my pretty miserable self, my black and hardly used sea-chest, and a few yards off, Cherry with his hands rammed deep into his pockets as with professional interest and hypnotic concentration he watched a porter noisily handling milk-churns. I dare not let *him* see any signs of sentimentality, but what a gap! Those great locomotives had torn bits from my heart as they pulled the heavy carriages from the platform.

Cherry proposed that we should "hold one down," and as we did so he informed me that of course he was not coming home with me; did I think that he was going to wear a boiled shirt and a plated collar, and go to bed every night with his boots *off* at his time of life? But he healed the wound a lot when he asked for my address so that he could let me know what happened to him, as he would very much like to meet me again. And the welcome at home soon completely filled the gap.

After a week of idleness I enrolled as a student of a Navigation School in Burdett Road and settled down to polish up the various subjects required to pass for a Second Mate's "square-rigged" certificate. Three weeks later I was adjudged ready for the examination and duly presented myself for the sight test, and FAILED.

My feelings at this astounding debacle were



mixed. Foremost was a yearning sympathy for my parents, for this meant the waste of a long and expensive technical education and the dashing of fond hopes, and the worry of a fresh start. I felt humiliated and crushed at what appeared to me to be so landlubberly and effeminate an affliction, but the regret at leaving the sea was not so keen as might be expected, and on the contrary I was soon interested in what the future held in store for me. I must remind my father about the ship-chandlery business anyway.

I wired home and then mooched, moody and crestfallen, to break the news at the School and retrieve my now useless books. Genuine and generous sympathy was shown by the Crammar and my fellow students, and as I came slowly down the last flight of stairs I saw framed in the doorway a very familiar back over the shoulder of which peered a very red face wrinkled into a smile of incredulous amusement. It was Cherry, who had buttonholed a passing Master Mariner and literally yarned out of him a position as boatswain.

I told Cherry the news and he said :

"I *knew* what'd come of them gol-darned books, but here, I don't want it now, I'm fixed, and I'm sorry it ain't more."

He pulled from his pocket a handful of mixed coins, gold, silver and copper, which I refused with a gesture of such supreme desolation that he immediately suggested a "binder."

I had failed by the narrowest of margins and

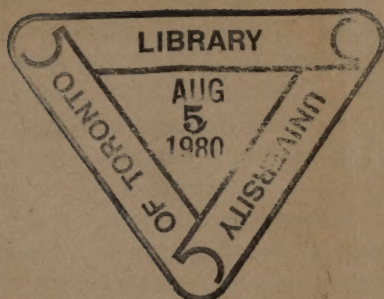
the examiner had kindly given me the address of an oculist and, accompanied by Cherry, I made my way to a place somewhere behind Oxford Street, and after impatiently kicking my heels, or making signals to Cherry standing outside, for nearly an hour, I was called in.

The report was none too encouraging. I was suffering from a sort of malignant myopia and my sight would get steadily worse owing to the increasing elongation of the eyeballs. The trouble had only just developed and now the only thing to do was to assist the eyes with a pair of spectacles. God help me!

Directly I told Cherry he suggested a "closer" and as we waited at the station he recommended a "folder." As the train drew out of the station Cherry's fierce, honest and lovable face dropped astern and I realised in all its fearful import the disaster that had overtaken me. No more wind-swept decks, no more curling greybeards, no more lazing under tropic skies, no more dog-watch yarns, no more biscuit-eating mouldy-headed old stiffes and . . . *GOGGLES!*

The End







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